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(THIRD SERIES.)

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BY

LESLIE STEPHEN.

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I.

MASSINGER.

In one of the best of his occasional essays, Kingsley held a brief for the plaintiffs in the old case of Puritans *versus* Playwrights. The litigation in which this case represents a minor issue has lasted for a period far exceeding that of the most pertinacious lawsuit, and is not likely to come to an end within any assignable limits of time. When the discussion is pressed home, it is seen to involve fundamentally different conceptions of human life and its purposes; and it can only cease when we have discovered the grounds of a permanent conciliation between the ethical and the æsthetic elements of human nature. The narrower controversy between the stage and the Church has itself a long history. It has left some curious marks upon English

literature. The prejudice which uttered itself through the Puritan Prynne was inherited, in a later generation, by the High-Churchmen Collier and William Law. The attack, it is true, may be ostensibly directed — as in Kingsley's essay—against the abuse of the stage rather than against the stage itself. Kingsley pays the usual tribute to Shakespeare whilst denouncing the whole literature of which Shakespeare's dramas are the most conspicuous product. But then, everybody always distinguishes in terms between the use and the abuse; and the line of demarcation generally turns out to be singularly fluctuating and uncertain. You can hardly demolish Beaumont and Fletcher without bringing down some of the outlying pinnacles, if not shaking the very foundations, of the temple sacred to Shakespeare.

It would be regrettable, could one stop to regret the one-sided and illogical construction of the human mind, that a fair judgment in such matters seems to require incompatible qualities. Your impartial critic or historian is generally a man who leaves out of account nothing but the essential. His impartiality means sympathy with the commonplace, and incapacity for understanding heroic faith and overpowering enthusiasm. He fancies that a man or a book can be judged by balancing a list of virtues and vices as if they were separate entities lying

side by side in a box, instead of different aspects of a vital force. On the other hand, the vivid imagination which restores dead bones to life makes its possessor a partisan in extinct quarrels, and as short-sighted and unfair a partisan as the original actors. Roundheads and Cavaliers have been dead these two centuries.

> Dumb are those names erewhile in battle loud ;
> Dreamfooted as the shadow of a cloud,
> They flit across the ear.

Yet few even amongst modern writers are capable of doing justice to both sides without first making both sides colourless. Hallam judges men in the throes of a revolution as though they were parties in a law-suit to be decided by precedents and parchments, and Mr. Carlyle cannot appreciate Cromwell's magnificent force of character without making him all but infallible and impeccable. Critics of the early drama are equally one-sided. The exquisite literary faculty of Charles Lamb revelled in detecting beauties which had been covered with the dust of oblivion during the reign of Pope. His appreciation was intensified by that charm of discovery which finds its typical utterance in Keats's famous sonnet. He was scarcely a more impartial judge of Fletcher or Ford than "Stout Cortes" of the new world revealed by his enterprise. We may willingly

defer to his judgment of the relative value of the writers whom he discusses, but we must qualify his judgment of their intrinsic excellence by the recollection that he speaks as a lover. To him and other thoroughgoing admirers of the old drama the Puritanical onslaught upon the stage presented itself as the advent of a gloomy superstition, ruthlessly stamping out all that was beautiful in art and literature. Kingsley, an admirable hater, could perceive only the opposite aspect of the phenomena. To him the Puritan protest appears as the voice of the enlightened conscience; the revolution means the troubling of the turbid waters at the descent of the angel; Prynne's "Histriomastix" is the blast of the trumpet at which the rotten and polluted walls of Jericho are to crumble into dust. The stage, which represented the tone of aristocratic society, rightfully perished with the order which it flattered. Courtiers had learnt to indulge in a cynical mockery of virtue, or to find an unholy attraction in the accumulation of extravagant horrors. The English drama, in short, was one of those evil growths which are fostered by deeply-seated social corruption, and are killed off by the breath of a purer air. That such phenomena occur at times is undeniable. Mr. Symonds has recently shown us in his history of the Renaissance, how the Italian literature,

to which our English dramatists owed so many suggestions, was the natural fruit of a society poisoned at the roots. Nor, when we have shaken off that spirit of slavish adulation in which modern antiquarians and critics have regarded the so-called Elizabethan dramatists, can we deny that there are symptoms of a similar mischief in their writings. Some of the most authoritative testimonials have a suspicious element. Praise has been lavished upon the most questionable characteristics of the old drama. Apologists have been found, not merely for its daring portrayal of human passion, but for its wanton delight in the grotesque and the horrible for its own sake; and some critics have revenged themselves for the straitlaced censures of Puritan morality by praising work in which the author strives to atone for imaginative weakness by a choice of revolting motives. Such adulation ought to have disappeared with the first fervour of rehabilitation. Much that has been praised in the old drama is rubbish, and some of it disgusting rubbish.

The question, however, remains, how far we ought to adopt either view of the situation? Are we bound to cast aside the later dramas of the school as simply products of corruption? It may be of interest to consider the light thrown upon this question by the works

of Massinger, nearly the last of the writers who can really claim a permanent position in literature. Massinger, born in 1584, died in 1639. His surviving works were composed, with one exception, after 1620. They represent, therefore, the tastes of the play-going classes during the rapid development of the great struggle which culminated in the rebellion. In a literary sense it is the period when the imaginative impulse represented by the great dramatists was running low. It is curious to reflect that, if Shakespeare had lived out his legitimate allowance of threescore years and ten, he might have witnessed the production, not only of the first but of nearly all the best works of his school; had his life been prolonged for ten years more, he would have witnessed its final extinction. Within these narrow limits of time the drama had undergone a change corresponding to the change in the national mood. The difference, for example, between Marlowe and Massinger at the opening and the close of the period—though their births were separated by only twenty years—corresponds to the difference between the temper of the generation which repelled the Armada and the temper of the generation which fretted under the rule of the first Stuarts. The misnomer of Elizabethan as applied to the whole school indicates an implicit perception

that its greater achievements were due to the same impulse which took for its outward and visible symbol the name of the great Queen. But it has led also to writers being too summarily classed together who really represent very different phases in a remarkable evolution. After making all allowances for personal idiosyncrasies, we can still see how profoundly the work of Massinger is coloured by the predominant sentiment of the later epoch.

As little is known of Massinger's life as of the lives of most of the contemporary dramatists who had the good or ill fortune to be born before the days of the modern biographical mania. It is known that he, like most of his brethren, suffered grievously from impecuniosity; and he records in one of his dedications his obligations to a patron without whose bounty he would for many years have "but faintly subsisted." His father had been employed by Henry, Earl of Pembroke; but Massinger, though acknowledging a certain debt of gratitude to the Herbert family, can hardly have received from them any effective patronage. Whatever their relations may have been, it has been pointed out by Professor Gardiner[1] that Massinger probably sympathised with the political views represented by the two

[1] "Contemporary Review" for August 1876.

sons of his father's patron, who were successively Earls of Pembroke during the reigns of the first James and Charles. On two occasions he got into trouble with the licenser for attacks, real or supposed, upon the policy of the government. More than one of his plays contain, according to Mr. Gardiner, references to the politics of the day as distinct as those conveyed by a cartoon in "Punch." The general result of his argument is to show that Massinger sympathised with the views of an aristocratic party who looked with suspicion upon the despotic tendencies of Charles's government, and thought that they could manage refractory parliaments by adopting a more spirited foreign policy. Though in reality weak and selfish enough, they affected to protest against the materialising and oppressive policy of the extreme royalists. How far these views represented any genuine convictions, and how far Massinger's adhesion implied a complete sympathy with them, or might indicate that kind of delusion which often leads a mere literary observer to see a lofty intention in the schemes of a selfish politician, are questions which I am incompetent to discuss, and which obviously do not admit of a decided answer. They confirm, as far as they go, the general impression as to Massinger's point of view which we should derive from his writings without

special interpretation. "Shakespeare," says Coleridge, "gives the permanent politics of human nature" (whatever they may be!), "and the only predilection which appears shows itself in his contempt of mobs and the populace. Massinger is a decided Whig; Beaumont and Fletcher high-flying, passive-obedience Tories." The author of "Coriolanus," one would be disposed to say, showed himself a thoroughgoing aristocrat, though in an age when the popular voice had not yet given utterance to systematic political discontent. He was still a stranger to the sentiments symptomatic of an approaching revolution, and has not explicitly pronounced upon issues hardly revealed even to

> The prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming of things to come.

The sense of national unity evolved in the great struggle with Spain had not yet been lost in the discord of the rising generation. The other classifications may be accepted with less reserve. The dramatists represented the views of their patrons. The drama reflected in the main the sentiments of an aristocratic class alarmed by the growing vigour of the Puritanical citizens. Fletcher is, as Coleridge says, a thoroughgoing Tory; his sentiments in "Valentinian" are, to follow the same guidance, so "very slavish and reptile" that it is a trial of charity

to read them. Nor can we quite share Coleridge's rather needless surprise that they should emanate from the son of a bishop, and that the duty to God should be the supposed basis. A servile bishop in those days was not a contradiction in terms, and still less a servile son of a bishop; and it must surely be admitted that the theory of Divine Right may lead, illogically or otherwise, to reptile sentiments. The difference between Fletcher and Massinger, who were occasional collaborators and apparently close friends (Massinger, it is said, was buried in Fletcher's grave), was probably due to difference of temperament as much as to the character of Massinger's family connection. Massinger's melancholy is as marked as the buoyant gaiety of his friend and ally. He naturally represents the misgivings which must have beset the more thoughtful members of his party, as Fletcher represented the careless vivacity of the Cavalier spirit. Massinger is given to expatiating upon the text that

> Subjects' lives
> Are not their prince's tennis-balls, to be bandied
> In sport away.

The high-minded Pulcheria, in the "Emperor of the East," administers a bitter reproof to a slavish "projector" who

> Roars out
> All is the King's, his will above the laws;

who whispers in his ear that nobody should bring a salad from his garden without paying "gabel," or kill a hen without excise; who suggests that, if a prince wants a sum of money, he may make impossible demands from a city and exact arbitrary fines for its non-performance.

> Is this the way
> To make our Emperor happy? Can the groans
> Of his subjects yield him music? Must his thresholds
> Be wash'd with widows' and wrong'd orphans' tears,
> Or his power grow contemptible?

Mr. Gardiner tells us that at the time at which these lines were written they need not have been taken as referring to Charles. But the vein of sentiment which often occurs elsewhere is equally significant of Massinger's view of the political situation of the time. We see what were the topics that were beginning to occupy men's minds.

Dryden made the remark, often quoted for purposes of indignant reprobation by modern critics, that Beaumont and Fletcher "understood and imitated the conversation of gentlemen much better" (than Shakespeare); "whose wild debaucheries and quickness of wit in repartees no poet can ever paint as they did." It is, of course, easy enough to reply that in the true sense of the word "gentleman" Shakespeare's heroes

are incomparably superior to those of his successors; but then this is just the sense in which Dryden did not use the word. His real meaning indicates a very sound piece of historical criticism. Fletcher describes a new social type; the "King's Young Courtier" who is deserting the good old ways of his father, the "old courtier of the Queen." The change is but one step in that continuous process which has substituted the modern gentleman for the old feudal noble; but the step taken at that period was great and significant. The chivalrous type, represented in Sidney's life and Spenser's poetry, is beginning to be old-fashioned and out of place as the industrial elements of society become more prominent. The aristocrat in the rising generation finds that his occupation is going. He takes to those "wild debaucheries" which Dryden oddly reckons among the attributes of a true gentleman; and learns the art of "quick repartee" in the courtly society which has time enough on its hands to make a business of amusement. The euphuism and allied affectations of the earlier generation had a certain grace, as the external clothing of a serious chivalrous sentiment; but it is rapidly passing into a silly coxcombry to be crushed by Puritanism or snuffed out by the worldly cynicism of the new generation. Shakespeare's Henry

or Romeo may indulge in wild freaks or abandon themselves to the intense passions of vigorous youth; but they will settle down into good statesmen and warriors as they grow older. Their love-making is a phase in their development, not the business of their lives. Fletcher's heroes seem to be not only occupied for the moment, but to make a permanent profession of what with their predecessors was a passing phase of youthful ebullience. It is true that we have still a long step to make before we sink to the mere *roué*, the shameless scapegrace and cynical man about town of the Restoration. To make a Wycherley you must distil all the poetry out of a Fletcher. Fletcher is a true poet; and the graceful sentiment, though mixed with a coarse alloy, still repels that unmitigated grossness which, according to Burke's famous aphorism, is responsible for half the evil of vice. He is still alive to generous and tender emotions, though it can scarcely be said that his morality has much substance in it. It is a sentiment, not a conviction, and covers without quenching many ugly and brutal emotions.

In Fletcher's wild gallants, still adorned by a touch of the chivalrous; reckless, immoral, but scarcely cynical; not sceptical as to the existence of virtue, but only admitting morality by way of parenthesis to the habitual

current of their thoughts, we recognise the kind of stuff from which to frame the cavaliers who will follow Rupert and be crushed by Cromwell. A characteristic sentiment which occurs constantly in the drama of the period represents the soldier out of work. We are incessantly treated to lamentations upon the ingratitude of the comfortable citizens who care nothing for the men to whom they owed their security. The political history of the times explains the popularity of such complaints. Englishmen were fretting under their enforced abstinence from the exciting struggles on the Continent. There was no want of Dugald Dalgettys returning from the wars to afford models for the military braggart or the bluff honest soldier, both of whom go swaggering through so many of the plays of the time. Clarendon in his Life speaks of the temptations which beset him from mixing with the military society of the time. There was a large and increasing class, no longer finding occupation in fighting Spaniards and searching for Eldorado, and consequently; in the Yankee phrase, "spoiling for a fight." When the time comes, they will be ready enough to fight gallantly, and to show an utter incapacity for serious discipline. They will meet the citizens, whom they have mocked so merrily, and find that reck

less courage and spasmodic chivalry do not exhaust the qualifications for military success.

Massinger represents a different turn of sentiment which would be encouraged in some minds by the same social conditions. Instead of abandoning himself frankly to the stream of youthful sentiment, he feels that it has a dangerous aspect. The shadow of coming evils was already dark enough to suggest various forebodings. But he is also a moraliser by temperament. Mr. Ward says that his strength is owing in a great degree to his appreciation of the great moral forces; and the remark is only a confirmation of the judgment of most of his critics. It is, of course, not merely that he is fond of adding little moral tags of questionable applicability to the end of his plays. "We are taught," he says in the "Fatal Dowry,"

> By this sad precedent, how just soever
> Our reasons are to remedy our wrongs,
> We are yet to leave them to their will and power
> That to that purpose have authority."

But it is, to say the least, doubtful whether anybody would have that judicious doctrine much impressed upon him by seeing the play itself. Nor can one rely much upon the elaborate and very eloquent defence of his art in the "Roman Actor." Paris, the actor, sets

forth very vigorously that the stage tends to lay bare the snares to which youth is exposed and to inflame a noble ambition by example. If the discharge of such a function deserves reward from the Commonwealth—

> Actors may put in for as large a share
> As all the sects of the philosophers;—
> They with cold precepts—perhaps seldom read—
> Deliver what an honourable thing
> The active virtue is; but does that fire
> The blood, or swell the veins with emulation
> To be both good and great, equal to that
> Which is presented in our theatres?

Massinger goes on to show, after the fashion of Jaques in "As You Like It," that the man who chooses to put on the cap is responsible for the application of the satire. He had good reasons, as we have seen, for feeling sensitive as to misunderstandings—or, rather, too thorough understandings—of this kind.

To some dramatists of the time, who should put forward such a plea, one would be inclined to answer in the sensible words of old Fuller. "Two things," he says, "are set forth to us in stage-plays; some grave sentences, prudent counsels, and punishment of vicious examples: and with these desperate oaths, lustful talk, and riotous acts, are so personated to the life, that wantons are tickled with delight, and feed their

palates upon them. It seems the goodness is not portrayed with equal accents of liveliness as the wicked things are; otherwise men would be deterred from vicious courses, with seeing the woful success which follows them"—a result scarcely to be claimed by the actors of the day. Massinger, however, shows more moral feeling than is expended in providing sentiments to be tacked on as an external appendage, or satisfied by an obedience to the demands of poetic justice. He is not content with knocking his villains on the head—a practice in which he, like his contemporaries, indulges with only too much complacency. The idea which underlies most of his plays is a struggle of virtue assailed by external or inward temptations. He is interested by the ethical problems introduced in the play of conflicting passions, and never more eloquent than in uttering the emotions of militant or triumphant virtue. His view of life, indeed, is not only grave, but has a distinct religious colouring. From various indications, it is probable that he was a Roman Catholic. Some of these are grotesque enough. The "Renegado," for example, not only shows that Massinger was, for dramatic purposes at least, an ardent believer in baptismal regeneration, but includes—what one would scarcely have sought in such a place—a

discussion as to the validity of lay-baptism. The first of his surviving plays, the "Virgin Martyr" (in which he was assisted by Dekker), is simply a dramatic version of an ecclesiastical legend. Though it seems to have been popular at the time, the modern reader will probably think that, in this case at least, the religious element is a little out of place. An angel and a devil take an active part in the performance; miracles are worked on the stage; the unbelievers are so shockingly wicked, and the Christians so obtrusively good, that we—the worldly-minded—are sensible of a little recalcitration, unless we are disarmed by the simplicity of the whole performance. Religious tracts of all ages and in all forms are apt to produce this ambiguous effect. Unless we are quite in harmony with their assumptions, we feel that they deal too much in conventional rose-colour. The angelic and diabolic elements are not so clearly discriminated in this world, and should show themselves less unequivocally on the stage, which ought to be its mirror. Such art was not congenial to the English atmosphere; it might be suitable in Madrid; but when forcibly transplanted to the London stage, we feel that the performance has not the simple earnestness by which alone it can be justified. The sentiment has a certain unreality, and the

naïveté suggests affectation. The implied belief is got up for the moment and has a hollow ring. And therefore, the whole work, in spite of some eloquence, is nothing better than a curiosity, as an attempt at the assimilation of a heterogeneous form of art.

A similar vein of sentiment, though not showing itself in so undiluted a form, runs through most of Massinger's plays. He is throughout a sentimentalist and a rhetorician. He is not, like the greatest men, dominated by thoughts and emotions which force him to give them external embodiment in life-like symbols. He is rather a man of much real feeling and extraordinary facility of utterance, who finds in his stories convenient occasions for indulging in elaborate didactic utterances upon moral topics. It is probably this comparative weakness of the higher imaginative faculty which makes Lamb speak of him rather disparagingly. He is too self-conscious and too anxious to enforce downright moral sentiments to satisfy a critic by whom spontaneous force and direct insight were rightly regarded as the highest poetic qualities. A single touch in Shakespeare, or even in Webster or Ford, often reveals more depth of feeling than a whole scene of Massinger's facile and often deliberately forensic eloquence. His temperament is indicated by the peculiarities of his

style. It is, as Coleridge says, poetry differentiated by the smallest possible degree from prose. The greatest artists of blank verse have so complete a mastery of their language that it is felt as a fibre which runs through and everywhere strengthens the harmony, and is yet in complete subordination to the sentiment. With a writer of the second order, such as Fletcher, the metre becomes more prominent, and at times produces a kind of monotonous sing-song, which begins to remind us unpleasantly of the still more artificial tone characteristic of the rhymed tragedies of the next generation. Massinger diverges in the opposite direction. The metre is felt enough and only just enough to give a more stately step to rather florid prose. It is one of his marks that a line frequently ends by some insignificant "of" or "from," so as to exclude the briefest possible pause in reading. Thus, to take an example pretty much at random, the following instance might be easily read without observing that it was blank verse at all:—

"Your brave achievements in the war, and what you did for me, unspoken, because I would not force the sweetness of your modesty to a blush, are written here; and that there might be nothing wanting to sum up my numerous engagements (never in my hopes to be

cancelled), the great duke, our mortal enemy, when my father's country lay open to his fury and the spoil of the victorious army, and I brought into his power, hath shown himself so noble, so full of honour, temperance, and all virtues that can set off a prince; that, though I cannot render him that respect I would, I am bound in thankfulness to admire him."

Such a style is suitable to a man whose moods do not often hurry him into impetuous, or vivacious, or epigrammatic utterance. As the Persian poet says of his country: his warmth is not heat, and his coolness is not cold. He flows on in a quiet current, never breaking into foam or fury, but vigorous, and invariably lucid. As a pleader before a law-court—the character in which, as Mr. Ward observes, he has a peculiar fondness for presenting himself—he would carry his audience along with him, but scarcely hold them in spell-bound astonishment or hurry them into fits of excitement. Melancholy resignation or dignified dissatisfaction will find in him a powerful exponent, but scarcely despair, or love, or hatred, or any social phase of pure unqualified passion.

The natural field for the display of such qualities is the romantic drama, which Massinger took from the hands of Beaumont and Fletcher, and endowed with

greater dignity and less poetic fervour. For the vigorous comedy of real life, as Jonson understood it, he has simply no capacity; and in his rare attempts at humour, succeeds only in being at once dull and dirty. His stage is generally occupied with dignified lords and ladies, professing the most chivalrous sentiments, which are occasionally too high-flown and overstrained to be thoroughly effective, but which are yet uttered with sufficient sincerity. They are not mere hollow pretences, consciously adopted to conceal base motives; but one feels the want of an occasional infusion of the bracing air of common sense. It is the voice of a society still inspired with the traditional sentiments of honour and self-respect, but a little afraid of contact with the rough realities of life. Its chivalry is a survival from a past epoch, not a spontaneous outgrowth of the most vital elements of contemporary development. In another generation, such a tone will be adopted by a conscious and deliberate artifice, and be reflected in mere theatrical rant. In the past, it was the natural expression of a high-spirited race, full of self-confidence and pride in its own vigorous audacity. In this transitional period it has a certain hectic flush, symptomatic of approaching decay; anxious to give a wide berth to realities, and most at home in the border-land where

dreams are only half dispelled by the light of common day. "Don Quixote" had sounded the knell of the old romance, but something of the old spirit still lingers, and can tinge with an interest, not yet wholly artificial, the lives and passions of beings who are thus hovering on the outskirts of the living world. The situations most characteristic of Massinger's tendency are in harmony with this tone of sentiment. They are romances taken from a considerable variety of sources, developed in a clearly connected series of scenes. They are wanting in the imaginative unity of the great plays, which show that a true poet has been profoundly moved by some profound thought embodied in a typical situation. He does not, like Shakespeare, seize his subject by the heart, because it has first fascinated his imagination; nor, on the other hand, have we that bewildering complexity of motives and intricacy of plot which shows at best a lawless and wandering fancy, and which often fairly puzzles us in many English plays, and enforces frequent reference to the list of personages in order to disentangle the crossing threads of the action. Massinger's plays are a gradual unravelling of a series of incidents, each following intelligibly from the preceding situation, and suggestive of many eloquent observations, though not developments of one master-

thought. We often feel that, if external circumstances had been propitious, he would have expressed himself more naturally in the form of a prose romance than in a drama. Nor, again, does he often indulge in those exciting and horrible situations which possess such charms for his contemporaries. There are occasions, it is true, in which this element is not wanting. In the "Unnatural Combat," for example, we have a father killing his son in a duel, by the end of the second act; and when, after a succession of horrors of the worst kind, we are treated to a ghost, "full of wounds, leading in the shadow of a lady, her face leprous," and the worst criminal is killed by a flash of lightning, we feel that we were fully entitled to such a catastrophe. We can only say, in Massinger's words,—

> May we make use of
> This great example, and learn from it that
> There cannot be a want of power above
> To punish murder and unlawful love!

The "Duke of Milan" again culminates with a horrible scene, rivalling, though with less power, the grotesque horrors of Webster's "Duchess of Malfi." Other instances might be given of concessions to that blood-and-thunder style of dramatic writing for which our ancestors had a never-failing appetite. But, as a

rule, Massinger inclines, as far as contemporary writers will allow him, to the side of mercy. Instead of using slaughter so freely that a new set of actors has to be introduced to bury the old—a misfortune which sometimes occurs in the plays of the time—he generally tends to a happy solution, and is disposed not only to dismiss his virtuous characters to felicity, but even to make his villains virtuous. We have not been excited to that pitch at which our passions can only be harmonised by an effusion of blood, and a mild solution is sufficient for the calmer feelings which have been aroused.

This tendency illustrates Massinger's conception of life in another sense. Nothing is more striking in the early stage than the vigour of character of most of these heroes. Individual character, as it is said, takes the place in the modern of fate in the ancient drama. Every man is run in a mould of iron, and may break, but cannot bend. The fitting prologue to the whole literature is provided by Marlowe's Tamburlaine, with his superhuman audacity and vast bombastic rants, the incarnation of a towering ambition which scorns all laws but its own devouring passion. Faustus, braving all penalties, human and divine, is another variety of the same type; and when we have to do with a weak

character like Edward II., we feel that it is his natural destination to be confined in a loathsome dungeon, with mouldy bread to eat and ditch-water to drink. The world is for the daring; and though daring may be pushed to excess, weakness is the one unpardonable offence. A thoroughgoing villain is better than a trembling saint. If Shakespeare's instinctive taste revealed the absurdity of the bombastic exaggeration of such tendencies, his characters are equally unbending. His villains die, like Macbeth and Iago, with their teeth set, and scorn even a deathbed repentance. Hamlet exhibits the unfitness for a world of action of the man who is foolish enough to see two sides to every question. So again, Chapman, the writer who in fulness and fire of thought approaches most nearly to Shakespeare, is an ardent worshipper of pure energy of character. His Bussy d'Ambois cannot be turned from his purpose even by the warnings of the ghost of his accomplice, and a mysterious spirit summoned expressly to give advice. An admirably vigorous phrase from one of the many declamations of his hero Byron—another representative of the same haughty strength of will—gives his theory of character:—

> Give me a spirit that on this life's rough sea
> Loves t' have his sail filled with a lusty wind,

> Even till his sailyards tremble, his masts crack,
> And his rapt ship run on her side so low
> That she drinks water, and her keel plows air.

Pure, undiluted energy, stern force of will, delight in danger for its own sake, contempt for all laws but the self-imposed, those are the cardinal virtues, and challenge our sympathy even when they lead their possessor to destruction. The psychology implied in Jonson's treating of "humour" is another phase of the same sentiment. The side by which energetic characters lend themselves to comedy is the exaggeration of some special trait which determines their course as tyrannically as ambition governs the character suited for tragedy.

When we turn to Massinger, this boundless vigour has disappeared. The blood has grown cool. The tyrant no longer forces us to admiration by the fulness of his vitality, and the magnificence of his contempt for law. Whether for good or bad, he is comparatively a poor creature. He has developed an uneasy conscience, and even whilst affecting to defy the law, trembles at the thought of an approaching retribution. His boasts have a shrill, querulous note in them. His creator does not fully sympathise with his passion. Massinger cannot throw himself into the situation; and

is anxious to dwell upon the obvious moral considerations which prove such characters to be decidedly inconvenient members of society for their tamer neighbours. He is of course the more in accordance with a correct code of morality, but fails correspondingly in dramatic force and brilliance of colour. To exhibit a villain truly, even to enable us to realise the true depth of his villany, one must be able for a moment to share his point of view, and therefore to understand the true law of his being. It is a very sound rule in the conduct of life, that we should not sympathise with scoundrels. But the morality of the poet, as of the scientific psychologist, is founded upon the unflinching veracity which sets forth all motives with absolute impartiality. Some sort of provisional sympathy with the wicked there must be, or they become mere impossible monsters or the conventional scarecrows of improving tracts.

This is Massinger's weakest side. His villains want backbone, and his heroes are deficient in simple overmastering passion, or supplement their motives by some overstrained and unnatural crotchet. Impulsiveness takes the place of vigour, and indicates the want of a vigorous grasp of the situation. Thus, for example, the "Duke of Milan," which is certainly amongst the more impressive of Massinger's plays, may be described

as a variation upon the theme of "Othello." To measure the work of any other writer by its relation to that masterpiece is, of course, to apply a test of undue severity. Of comparison, properly speaking, there can be no question. The similarity of the situation, however, may bring out Massinger's characteristics. The Duke, who takes the place of Othello, is, like his prototype, a brave soldier. The most spirited and effective passage in the play is the scene in which he is brought as a prisoner before Charles V., and not only extorts the admiration of his conqueror, but wins his liberty by a dignified avowal of his previous hostility, and avoidance of any base compliance. The Duke shows himself to be a high-minded gentleman, and we are so far prepared to sympathise with him when exposed to the wiles of Francisco—the Iago of the piece. But, unfortunately, the scene is not merely a digression in a constructive sense, but involves a psychological inconsistency. The gallant soldier contrives to make himself thoroughly contemptible. He is represented as excessively uxorious, and his passion takes the very disagreeable turn of posthumous jealousy. He has instructed Francisco to murder the wife whom he adores, in case of his own death during the war, and thus to make sure that she could not marry anybody else. On

his return, the wife, who has been informed by the treachery of Francisco of this pleasant arrangement, is naturally rather cool to him; whereupon he flies into a rage and swears that he will

Never think of curs'd Marcelia more.

His affection returns in another scene, but only in order to increase his jealousy, and on hearing Francisco's slander he proceeds to stab his wife out of hand. It is the action of a weak man in a passion, not of a noble nature tortured to madness. Finding out his mistake, he of course repents again, and expresses himself with a good deal of eloquence, which would be more effective if we could forget the overpowering pathos of the parallel scene in "Othello." Much sympathy, however, is impossible for a man whose whole conduct is so flighty, and so obviously determined by the immediate demands of successive situations of the play, and not the varying manifestation of a powerfully conceived character. Francisco is a more coherent villain, and an objection made by Hazlitt to his apparent want of motive is at least equally valid against Iago; but he is of course but a diluted version of that superlative villain, as Marcelia is a rather priggish and infinitely less tender Desdemona.

The failure, however, of the central figure to exhibit any fixity of character is the real weakness of the play; and the horrors of the last scene fail to atone for the want of the vivid style which reveals an "intense and gloomy mind."

This kind of versatility and impulsiveness of character is revealed by the curious convertibility—if one may use the word—of his characters. They are the very reverse of the men of iron of the previous generation. They change their state of mind as easily as the characters of the contemporary drama put on disguises. We are often amazed at the simplicity which enables a whole family to accept the brother and father to whom they have been speaking ten minutes before as an entire stranger, because he has changed his coat or talks broken English. The audience must have been easily satisfied in such cases; but it requires almost equal simplicity to accept some of Massinger's transformations. In such a play as the "Virgin Martyr," a religious conversion is a natural part of the scheme. Nor need we be surprised at the amazing facility with which a fair Mahommedan is converted in the "Renegado" by the summary assertion that the "juggling Prophet" is a cheat, and taught a pigeon to feed in his ear. Can there be strength, it is added,

in that religion which allows us to fear death? "This is unanswerable," exclaims the lady, "and there is something tells me I err in my opinion." This is almost as good as the sudden thought of swearing eternal friendship in the Anti-Jacobin. The hardened villain of the first act in the same play falls into despair in the third, and, with the help of an admirable Jesuit, becomes a most useful and exemplary convert by the fifth. But such catastrophes may be regarded as more or less miraculous. The versatility of character is more singular when religious conversions are not in question. "I am certain," says Philanax in the "Emperor of the East:"—

> A prince so soon in his disposition altered
> Was never heard nor read of.

That proves that Philanax was not familiar with Massinger's plays. The disposition of princes and of subjects is there constantly altered with the most satisfactory result. It is not merely that, as often happens elsewhere, the villains are summarily forced to repent at the end of a play, like Angelo in "Measure for Measure," in order to allow the curtain to fall upon a prospect of happiness. Such forced catastrophes are common, if clumsy enough. But there is something malleable in the very constitution of Massinger's char-

acters. They repent half-way through the performance, and see the error of their ways with a facility which we could wish to be imitated in common life. The truth seems to be that Massinger is subject to an illusion natural enough to a man who is more of the rhetorician than the seer. He fancies that eloquence must be irresistible. He takes the change of mood produced by an elevated appeal to the feelings for a change of character. Thus, for example, in the "Picture"—a characteristic, though not a very successful play—we have a story founded upon the temptations of a separated husband and wife. The husband carries with him a magical picture, which grows dark or bright according to the behaviour of the wife, whom it represents. The husband is tempted to infidelity by a queen, herself spoilt by the flatteries of an uxorious husband; and the wife by a couple of courtiers, who have all the vices of Fletcher's worst heroes without any of their attractions. The interest of the play, such as it is, depends upon the varying moods of the chief actors, who become so eloquent under a sense of wrong or a reflection upon the charms of virtue, that they approach the bounds of vice, and then gravitate back to respectability. Everybody becomes perfectly respectable before the end of the play is reached,

and we are to suppose that they will remain respectable ever afterwards. They avoid tragic results by their want of the overmastering passions which lead to great crimes or noble actions. They are really eloquent, but even more moved by their eloquence than the spectators can be. They form the kind of audience which would be most flattering to an able preacher, but in which a wise preacher would put little confidence. And, therefore, besides the fanciful incident of the picture, they give us an impression of unreality. They have no rich blood in their veins; and are little better than lay figures taking up positions as it may happen, in order to form an effective tableau illustrative of an unexceptionable moral.

There is, it is true, one remarkable exception to the general weakness of Massinger's characters. The vigour with which Sir Giles Overreach is set forth has made him the one well-known figure in Massinger's gallery, and the "New Way to Pay Old Debts" showed, in consequence, more vitality than any of his other plays. Much praise has been given, and rightly enough, to the originality and force of the conception. The conventional miser is elevated into a great man by a kind of inverse heroism, and made terrible instead of contemptible. But it is equally plain that here, too,

Massinger fails to project himself fairly into his villain. His rants are singularly forcible, but they are clearly what other people would think about him, not what he would really think, still less what he would say, of himself. Take, for example, the very fine speech in which he replies to the question of the virtuous nobleman, whether he is not frightened by the imprecations of his victims:—

> Yes, as rocks are
> When foaming billows split themselves against
> Their flinty sides; or as the moon is moved
> When wolves, with hunger pined, howl at her brightness.
> I am of a solid temper, and, like these,
> Steer on a constant course; with mine own sword,
> If called into the field, I can make that right
> Which fearful enemies murmur at as wrong.
> Now, for those other piddling complaints
> Breath'd out in bitterness, as when they call me
> Extortioner, tyrant, cormorant, or intruder
> On my poor neighbour's rights, or grand incloser
> Of what was common to my private use,
> Nay, when my ears are pierced with widows' cries,
> And undone orphans wash with tears my threshold,
> I only think what 'tis to have my daughter
> Right honourable; and 'tis a powerful charm
> Makes me insensible to remorse or pity,
> Or the least sting of conscience.

Put this into the third person; read "he" for "I," and "his" for "my," and it is an admirable bit of denunciation of a character probably intended as a

copy from life. It is a description of a wicked man from outside; and wickedness seen from outside is generally unreasonable and preposterous. When it is converted, by simple alteration of pronouns, into the villain's own account of himself, the internal logic which serves as a pretext disappears, and he becomes a mere monster. It is for this reason that, as Hazlitt says, Massinger's villains—and he was probably thinking especially of Overreach and Luke in a "City Madam"—appear like drunkards or madmen. His plays are apt to be a continuous declamation, cut up into fragments, and assigned to the different actors; and the essential unfitness of such a method to dramatic requirements needs no elaborate demonstration. The villains will have to denounce themselves, and will be ready to undergo conversion at a moment's notice, in order to spout openly on behalf of virtue as vigorously as they have spouted in transparent disguise on behalf of vice.

There is another consequence of Massinger's romantic tendency, which is more pleasing. The chivalrous ideal of morality involves a reverence for women, which may be exaggerated or affected, but which has at least a genuine element in it. The women on the earlier stage have comparatively a bad time of it amongst their

energetic companions. Shakespeare's women are undoubtedly most admirable and lovable creatures; but they are content to take a subordinate part, and their highest virtue generally includes entire submission to the will of their lords and masters. Some, indeed, have an abundant share of the masculine temperament, like Cleopatra or Lady Macbeth; but then they are by no means model characters. Iago's description of the model woman is a cynical version of the true Shakespearian theory. Women's true sphere, according to him, or according to the modern slang, is domestic life; and if circumstances force a Cordelia, an Imogen, a Rosalind, or a Viola, to take a more active share in life, they take good care to let us know that they have a woman's heart under their man's doublet. The weaker characters in Massinger give a higher place to women, and justify it by a sentiment of chivalrous devotion. The excess, indeed, of such submissiveness is often satirised. In the "Roman Actor," the "Emperor of the East," the "Duke of Milan," the "Picture," and elsewhere, we have various phases of uxorious weakness, which suggest possible application to the Court of Charles I. Elsewhere, as in the "Maid of Honour" and the "Bashful Lover," we are called upon to sympathise with manifestations of a highflown devotion to

feminine excellence. Thus, the bashful lover, who is the hero of one of his characteristic dramatic romances, is a gentleman who thinks himself scarcely worthy to touch his mistress's shoestring. On the sight of her he exclaims—

> As Moors salute
> The rising sun with joyful superstition,
> I could fall down and worship.—O my heart!
> Like Phœbe breaking through an envious cloud,
> Or something which no simile can express,
> She shows to me; a reverent fear, but blended
> With wonder and astonishment, does possess me.

When she condescends to speak to him, the utmost that he dares to ask is liberty to look at her, and he protests that he would never aspire to any higher privilege. It is gratifying to add that he follows her through many startling vicissitudes of fortunes in a spirit worthy of this exordium, and of course is finally persuaded that he may allow himself a nearer approach to his goddess. The Maid of Honour has two lovers, who accept a rather similar position. One of them is unlucky enough to be always making mischief by well-meant efforts to forward her interest. He, poor man, is rather ignominiously paid off in downright cash at the end of the piece. His more favoured rival listens to the offers of a rival duchess, and ends by falling between

two stools. He resigns himself to the career of a Knight of Malta, whilst the Maid of Honour herself retires into a convent. Mr. Gardiner compares this catastrophe unfavourably with that of "Measure for Measure," and holds that it is better for a lady to marry a duke than to give up the world as, on the whole, a bad business. A discussion of that question would involve some difficult problems. If, however, Isabella is better provided for by Shakespeare than Camiola, "the Maid of Honour," by Massinger, we must surely agree that the Maid of Honour has the advantage of poor Mariana, whose reunion with her hypocritical husband certainly strikes one as a questionable advantage. Her fate seems to intimate that marriage with a hypocritical tyrant ought to be regarded as better than no marriage at all. Massinger's solution is at any rate in harmony with the general tone of chivalrous sentiment. A woman who has been placed upon a pinnacle by over-strained devotion, cannot, consistently with her dignity, console herself like an ordinary creature of flesh and blood. When her worshippers turn unfaithful she must not look out for others. She may permit herself for once to return the affection of a worthy lover; but, when he fails, she must not condescend again to love. That would be to admit that love was a necessity of her

life, not a special act of favour for some exceptional proofs of worthiness. Given the general tone of sentiment, I confess that, to my taste, Massinger's solution has the merit, not only of originality, but of harmony. It may, of course, be held that a jilted lady should, in a perfect healthy state of society, have some other alternative besides a convent or an unworthy marriage. Some people, for example, may hold that she should be able to take to active life as a lawyer or a professor of medicine; or they may hold that love ought not to hold so prominent a part even in a woman's life—that disappointed passion should involve, as a necessary consequence, the entire abandonment of the world. But, taking the romantic point of view, of which it is the very essence to set an extravagant value upon love, and remembering that Massinger had not heard of modern doctrines of woman's rights, one must admit, I think, that he really shows, by the best means in his power, a strong sense of the dignity of womanhood, and that his catastrophe is more satisfactory than the violent death or the consignment to an inferior lover which would have commended themselves to most Elizabethan dramatists.

The same vein of chivalrous sentiment gives a fine tone to some of Massinger's other plays; to the "Bond-

man," for example, and the "Great Duke of Florence," in both of which the treatment of lover's devotion shows a higher sense of the virtue of feminine dignity and purity than is common in the contemporary stage. There is, of course, a want of reality, an admission of extravagant motives, and an absence of dramatic concentration, which indicate an absence of high imaginative power. Chivalry, at its best, is not very reconcilable with common sense; and the ideal hero is divided, as Cervantes shows, by very narrow distinctions from the downright madman. What was absurd in the more vigorous manifestations of the spirit does not vanish when its energy is lowered, and the rhetorician takes the place of the poet. But the sentiment is still genuine, and often gives real dignity to Massinger's eloquent speeches. It is true that, in apparent inconsistency with this excellence, passages of Massinger are even more deeply stained than usual with revolting impurities. Not only are his bad men and women apt to be offensive beyond all bearable limits, but places might be pointed out in which even his virtuous women indulge in language of the indescribable variety. The inconsistency of course admits of an easy explanation. Chivalrous sentiment by no means involves perfect purity, nor even a lofty conception of the true meaning

of purity. Even a strong religious feeling of a certain kind is quite compatible with considerable laxity in this respect. Charles I. was a virtuous monarch, according to the admission of his enemies; but, as Kingsley remarks, he suggested a plot to Shirley which would certainly not be consistent with the most lax modern notions of decency. The court of which he was the centre certainly included a good many persons who might have at once dictated Massinger's most dignified sentiments and enjoyed his worst ribaldry. Such, for example, if Clarendon's character of him be accurate, would have been the supposed "W. H.," the eldest of the two Earls of Pembroke, with whose family Massinger was so closely connected. But it is only right to add that Massinger's errors in this kind are superficial, and might generally be removed without injury to the structure of his plays.

I have said enough to suggest the general nature of the answer which would have to be made to the problem with which I started. Beyond all doubt, it would be simply preposterous to put down Massinger as a simple product of corruption. He does not mock at generous, lofty instincts, or overlook their influence as great social forces. Mr. Ward quotes him as an instance of the connection between poetic and moral

excellence. The dramatic effectiveness of his plays is founded upon the dignity of his moral sentiment; and we may recognise in him "a man who firmly believes in the eternal difference between right and wrong." I subscribe most willingly to the truth of Mr. Ward's general principle, and, with a certain reservation, to the correctness of this special illustration. But the reservation is an important one. After all, can anybody say honestly that he is braced and invigorated by reading Massinger's plays? Does he perceive any touch of what we feel when we have been in company, say, with Sir Walter Scott; a sense that our intellectual atmosphere is clearer than usual, and that we recognise more plainly than we are apt to do the surpassing value of manliness, honesty, and pure domestic affection? Is there not rather a sense that we have been all the time in an unnatural region, where, it is true, a sense of honour and other good qualities come in for much eloquent praise, but where, above everything, there is a marked absence of downright wholesome common-sense? Of course the effect is partly due to the region in which the old dramatists generally sought for their tragic situations. We are never quite at home in this fictitious cloudland, where the springs of action are strange, unaccountable, and altogether different from

those with which we have to do in the work a-day world. A great poet, indeed, weaves a magic mirror out of these dream-like materials, in which he shows us the great passions, love, and jealousy, and ambition, reflected upon a gigantic scale. But, in weaker hands, the characters become eccentric instead of typical: his vision simply distorts instead of magnifying the fundamental truths of human nature. The liberty which could be used by Shakespeare becomes dangerous for his successors. Instead of a legitimate idealisation, we have simply an abandonment of any basis in reality.

The admission that Massinger is moral must therefore be qualified by the statement that he is unnatural; or, in other words, that his morality is morbid. The groundwork of all the virtues, we are sometimes told, is strength. A strong nature may be wicked, but a weak one cannot attain any high moral level. The correlative doctrine in literature is, that the foundation of all excellence, artistic or moral, is a vivid perception of realities and a masculine grasp of facts. A man who has that essential quality will not blink the truths which we see illustrated every day around us. He will not represent vice as so ugly that it can have no charms, so foolish that it can never be plausible, or so unlucky that it can never be triumphant.

The robust moralist admits that vice is often pleasant, and that wicked men flourish like a green bay-tree. He cannot be over-anxious to preach, for he feels that the intrinsic charm of high qualities can dispense with any artificial attempts to bolster them up by sham rhetoric, or to slur over the hard facts of life. He will describe Iago as impartially as Desdemona; and having given us the facts, leave us to make what we please of them. It is the mark of a more sickly type of morality, that it must always be distorting the plain truth. It becomes sentimental, because it wishes to believe that what is pleasant must be true. It makes villains condemn themselves, because such a practice would save so much trouble to judges and moralists. Not appreciating the full force of passions, it allows the existence of grotesque and eccentric motives. It fancies that a little rhetoric will change the heart as well as the passing mood, and represents the claims of virtue as perceptible on the most superficial examination. The morality which requires such concessions becomes necessarily effeminate; it is unconsciously giving up its strongest position by implicitly admitting that the world in which virtue is possible is a very different one from our own.

The decline of the great poetic impulse does not yet reveal itself by sheer blindness to moral distinctions,

or downright subservience to vice. A lowered vitality does not necessarily imply disease, though it is favourable to the development of vicious germs. The morality which flourishes in an exhausted soil is not a plant of hardy growth and tough fibre, nourished by rough common-sense, flourishing amongst the fierce contests of vigorous passions, and delighting in the open air and the broad daylight. It loves the twilight of romance, and creates heroes impulsive, eccentric, extravagant in their resolves, servile in their devotion, and whose very natures are more or less allied to weakness and luxurious self-indulgence. Massinger, indeed, depicts with much sympathy the virtues of the martyr and the penitent; he can illustrate the paradox that strength can be conquered by weakness, and violence by resignation. His good women triumph by softening the hearts of their persecutors. Their purity is more attractive than the passions of their rivals. His deserted King shows himself worthy of more loyalty than his triumphant persecutors. His Roman actor atones for his weakness by voluntarily taking part in his own punishment.

Such passive virtues are undoubtedly most praiseworthy; but they may border upon qualities not quite so praiseworthy. It is a melancholy truth that your martyr is apt to be a little sanctimonious, and that a

penitent is generally a bit of a sneak. Resignation and self-restraint are admirable qualities, but admirable in proportion to the force of the opposing temptation. The strong man curbing his passions, the weak woman finding strength in patient suffering, are deserving of our deepest admiration ; but in Massinger we feel that the triumph of virtue implies rather a want of passion than a power of commanding it, and that resignation is comparatively easy when it connotes an absence of active force. The general lowering of vitality, the want of rigid dramatic colouring, deprive his martyrs of that background of vigorous reality against which their virtues would be forcibly revealed. His pathos is not vivid and penetrating. Truly pathetic power is produced only when we see that it is a sentiment wrung from a powerful intellect by keen sympathy with the wrongs of life. We are affected by the tears of a strong man ; but the popular preacher who enjoys weeping produces in us nothing but contempt. Massinger's heroes and heroines have not, we may say, backbone enough in them to make us care very deeply for their sorrows. And they moralise rather too freely. We do not want sermons, but sympathy, when we are in our deepest grief; and we do not feel that any one feels very keenly who can take his sorrows for a text, and preach in his

agony upon the vanity of human wishes or the excellence of resignation.

Massinger's remarkable flow of genuine eloquence, his real dignity of sentiment, his sympathy for virtuous motive, entitle him to respect; but we cannot be blind to the defect which keeps his work below the level of his greatest contemporaries. It is, in one word, a want of vital force. His writing is pitched in too low a key. He is not invigorating, stimulating, capable of fascinating us by the intensity of his conceptions. His highest range is a dignified melancholy or a certain chivalrous recognition of the noble side of human nature. The art which he represents is still a genuine and spontaneous growth instead of an artificial manufacture. He is not a mere professor of deportment, or maker of fine phrases. The days of mere affectation have not yet arrived; but, on the other hand, there is an absence of that grand vehemence of soul which breathes in the spontaneous, if too lawless, vigour of the older race. There is something hollow under all this stately rhetoric; there are none of those vivid phases which reveal minds moved by strong passions and excited by new aspects of the world. The sails of his verse are not, in Chapman's phrase, "filled with a lusty wind," but moving at best before a steady breath of romantic sentiment, and

sometimes flapping rather ominously for want of true impulse. High thinking may still be there, but it is a little self-conscious, and in need of artificial stimulant. The old strenuous spirit has disappeared, or gone elsewhere—perhaps to excite a Puritan imagination, and create another incarnation of the old type of masculine vigour in the hero of "Paradise Lost."

II.

FIELDING'S NOVELS.

A DOUBLE parallel has often been pointed out between the two pairs of novelists who were most popular in the middle of our own and of the preceding century. The intellectual affinity which made Smollett the favourite author of Dickens is scarcely so close as that which commended Fielding to Thackeray. The resemblance between "Pickwick" and "Humphrey Clinker," or between "David Copperfield" and "Roderick Random," consists chiefly in the exuberance of animal spirits, the keen eye for external oddity, the consequent tendency to substitute caricature for portrait, and the vivid transformation of autobiography into ostensible fiction, which are characteristic of both authors. Between Fielding and Thackeray the resemblance is closer. The peculiar irony of Jonathan Wild has its closest English parallel in Barry Lyndon. The burlesque in "Tom Thumb" of the Lee and Dryden school of tragedy may

remind us of Thackeray's burlesques of Scott and Dumas. The characters of the two authors belong to the same family. "Vanity Fair" has grown more decent since the days of Lady Bellaston, but the costume of the actors has changed more than their nature. Rawdon Crawley would not have been surprised to meet Captain Booth in a spunging-house; Shandon and his friends preserved the old traditions of Fielding's Grub Street; Lord Steyne and Major Pendennis were survivals from the more congenial period of Lord Fellamar and Colonel James; and the two Amelias represent cognate ideals of female excellence. Or, to take an instance of similarity in detail, might not this anecdote from "The Covent Garden Journal" have rounded off a paragraph in the "Snob Papers"? A friend of Fielding saw a dirty fellow in a mud-cart lash another with his whip, saying, with an oath, "I will teach you manners to your betters." Fielding's friend wondered what could be the condition of this social inferior of a mud-cart driver, till he found him to be the owner of a dust-cart driven by asses. The great butt of Fielding's satire is, as he tells us, affectation; the affectation which he specially hates is that of straitlaced morality; Thackeray's satire is more generally directed against the particular affectation called snobbishness;

but the evil principle attacked by either writer is merely one avatar of the demon assailed by the other.

The resemblance, which extends in some degree to style, might perhaps be shown to imply a very close intellectual affinity. I am content, however, to notice the literary genealogy as illustrative of the fact that Fielding was the ancestor of one great race of novelists. "I am," he says expressly in "Tom Jones," "the founder of a new province of writing." Richardson's "Clarissa"[1] and Smollett's "Roderick Random" were indeed published before "Tom Jones;" but the provinces over which Richardson and Smollett reigned were distinct from the contiguous province of which Fielding claimed to be the first legislator. Smollett (who comes nearest) professed to imitate "Gil Blas" as Fielding professed to imitate Cervantes. Smollett's story inherits from its ancestry a reckless looseness of construction. It is a series of anecdotes strung together by the accident that they all happen to the same person. "Tom Jones," on the contrary, has a carefully constructed plot, if not, as Coleridge asserts, one of

[1] Richardson wrote the first part of "Pamela" between November 10, 1739, and January 10, 1740. "Joseph Andrews" appeared in 1742. The first four volumes of "Clarissa Harlowe" and "Roderick Random" appeared in the beginning of 1748; "Tom Jones" in 1749.

the three best plots in existence (its rivals being "Œdipus Tyrannus" and "The Alchemist"). Its excellence depends upon the skill with which it is made subservient to the development of character and the thoroughness with which the working motives of the persons involved have been thought out. Fielding claims—even ostentatiously—that he is writing a history, not a romance; a history not the less true because all the facts are imaginary, for the fictitious incidents serve to exhibit the most general truths of human character. It is by this seriousness of purpose that his work is distinguished from the old type of novel, developed by Smollett, which is but a collection of amusing anecdotes; or from such work as De Foe's, in which the external facts are given with an almost provoking indifference to display of character and passion. Fielding's great novels have a true organic unity as well as a consecutive story, and are intended in our modern jargon as genuine studies in physiological analysis.[1]

Johnson, no mean authority when in his own sphere and free from personal bias, expressly traversed this claim; he declared that there was more knowledge of the human heart in a letter of "Clarissa" than in the

[1] See some appreciative remarks upon this in Scott's preface to the "Monastery."

whole of "Tom Jones;" and said more picturesquely, that Fielding could tell the hour by looking at the dial-plate, whilst Richardson knew how the clock was made.[1] It is tempting to set this down as a Johnsonian prejudice, and to deny or retort the comparison. Fielding, we might say, paints flesh and blood; whereas Richardson consciously constructs his puppets out of frigid abstractions. Lovelace is a bit of mechanism; Tom Jones a human being. In fact, however, such comparisons are misleading. Nothing is easier than to find an appropriate ticket for the objects of our criticism, and summarily pigeon-hole Richardson as an idealist and Fielding as a realist; Richardson as subjective and morbid, Fielding as objective and full of coarse health; or to attribute to either of them the deepest knowledge of the human heart. These are the mere banalities of criticism; and I can never hear them without a suspicion that a professor of æsthetics is trying to hoodwink me by a bit of technical platitude. The cant phrases which have been used so often by panegyrists too lazy to define their terms, have become

[1] It is rather curious that Richardson uses the same comparison to Miss Fielding. He assures her that her brother only knew the outside of a clock, whilst she knew all the finer springs and movements of its inside. See "Richardson's Correspondence," ii. 105.

almost as meaningless as the complimentary formulæ of society.

Knowledge of the human heart in particular is a phrase which covers very different states of mind. It may mean that power by which the novelist or dramatist identifies himself with his characters; sees through their eyes and feels with their senses: it is the product of a rich nature, a vivid imagination, and great powers of sympathy, and draws a comparatively small part of its resources from external experience. The novelist knows how his characters would feel under given conditions, because he feels it himself; he sees from within, not from without; and is almost undergoing an actual experience instead of condensing his observations on life. This is the power in which Shakespeare is supreme; which Richardson proved himself, in his most powerful passages, to possess in no small degree; and which in Balzac seems to have generated fits of absolute hallucination.

Fielding's novels are not without proof of this power, as no great imaginative work can be possible without it; but the knowledge for which he is specially conspicuous differs almost in kind. This knowledge is drawn from observation rather than intuitive sympathy. It consists in great part of those weighty maxims which

a man of keen powers of observation stores up in his passage through a varied experience. It is the knowledge of Ulysses, who has known—

> Cities of men
> And manners, climates, councils, governments;

the knowledge of a Machiavelli, who has looked behind the screen of political hypocrisies; the knowledge of which the essence is distilled in Bacon's "Essays;" or the knowledge of which Polonius seems to have retained many shrewd scraps even when he had fallen into his dotage. In reading "Clarissa" or "Eugénie Grandet" we are aware that the soul of Richardson or Balzac has transmigrated into another shape; that the author is projected into his character, and is really giving us one phase of his own sentiments. In reading Fielding we are listening to remarks made by a spectator instead of an actor; we are receiving the pithy recollections of the man about town; the prodigal who has been with scamps in gambling-houses, and drunk beer in pothouses and punch with country squires; the keen observer who has judged all characters, from Sir Robert Walpole down to Betsy Canning;[1] who has fought the hard battle of life with

[1] Fielding blundered rather strangely in the celebrated Betsy Canning case, as Balzac did in the "Affaire Peytel;" but the

unflagging spirit, though with many falls; and who, in spite of serious stains, has preserved the goodness of his heart and the soundness of his head. The experience is generally given in the shape of typical anecdotes rather than in explicit maxims; but it is not the less distinctly the concentrated essence of observation, rather than the spontaneous play of a vivid imagination. Like Balzac, Fielding has portrayed the "Comédie Humaine;" but his imagination has never overpowered the coolness of his judgment. He shows a superiority to his successor in fidelity almost as marked as his inferiority in vividness. And, therefore, it may be said in passing, it is refreshing to read Fielding at a time when this element of masculine observation is the one thing most clearly wanting in modern literature. Our novels give us the emotions of young ladies, which, in their way, are very good things; they reflect the sentimental view of life, and the sensational view, and the commonplace view, and the high philosophical view. One thing they do not tell us. What

story is too long for repetition in this place. The trials of Miss Canning and her supposed kidnappers are amongst the most amusing in the great collection of State Trials. See vol. xix. of the 8vo edition. Fielding's defence of his own conduct in the matter is reprinted in his "Miscellanies and Poems," being the supplementary volume of the last collected edition of his works.

does the world look like to a shrewd police-magistrate, with a keen eye in his head and a sound heart in his bosom? It might be worth knowing. Perhaps (who can tell ?) it would still look rather like Fielding's world.

The peculiarity is indicated by Fielding's method. Scott, who, like Fielding, generally describes from the outside, is content to keep himself in the background. "Here," he says to his readers, "are the facts; make what you can of them." Fielding will not efface himself; he is always present as chorus; he tells us what moral we ought to draw; he overflows with shrewd remarks, given in their most downright shape, instead of obliquely suggested through the medium of ancedotes; he likes to stop us as we pass through his portrait-gallery; to take us by the button-hole and expound his views of life and his criticisms on things in general. His remarks are often so admirable that we prefer the interpolations to the main current of narrative. Whether this plan is the best must depend upon the idiosyncrasy of the author; but it goes some way to explain one problem, over which Scott puzzles himself; namely, why Fielding's plays are so inferior to his novels. There are other reasons, external and internal; but it is at least clear that a man who can never retire

behind his puppets is not in the dramatic frame of mind. He is always lecturing where a dramatist must be content to pull the wires. Shakespeare is really as much present in his plays as Fielding in his novels; but he does not let us know it; whereas the excellent Fielding seems to be quite incapable of hiding his broad shoulders and lofty stature behind his little puppet-show.

There are, of course, actors in Fielding's world who can be trusted to speak for themselves. Tom Jones, at any rate, who is Fielding in his youth, or Captain Booth, who is the Fielding of later years, are drawn from within. Their creator's sympathy is so close and spontaneous that he has no need of his formulæ and precedents. But elsewhere he betrays his method by his desire to produce his authority. You will find the explanation of a certain line of conduct, he says, in "human nature, page almost the last." He is a little too fond of taking down that volume with a flourish; of exhibiting his familiarity with its pages, and referring to the passages which justify his assertions. Fielding has an odd touch of the pedant. He is fond of airing his classical knowledge; and he is equally fond of quoting this imaginary code which he has had to study so thoroughly and painfully. The effect, however, is to

give an air of artificiality to some of his minor characters. They show the traces of deliberate composition too distinctly, though the blemish may be forgiven in consideration of the genuine force and freshness of his thinking. If manufactured articles, they are not second-hand manufactures. His knowledge, unlike that of the good Parson Adams, comes from life, not books.

The worldly wisdom for which Fielding is so conspicuous had indeed been gathered in doubtful places, and shows traces of its origin. He had been forced, as he said, to choose between the positions of a hackney coachman and of a hackney writer. "His genius," said Lady M. W. Montague, who records the saying, "deserves a better fate." Whether it would have been equally fertile, if favoured by more propitious surroundings, is one of those fruitless questions which belongs to the boundless history of the might-have-beens. But one fact requires to be emphasised. Fielding's critics and biographers have dwelt far too exclusively upon the uglier side of his Bohemian life. They have presented him as yielding to all the temptations which can mislead keen powers of enjoyment, when the purse is one day at the lowest ebb and the next overflowing with the profits of some lucky hit at

the theatre. Those unfortunate yellow liveries which contributed to dissipate his little fortune have scandalised posterity as they scandalised his country neighbours. He has come to be one of the examples of that sagacious school who hold that a man of genius ought to be a scamp. But it is essential to remember that the history of the Fielding of later years, of the Fielding to whom we owe the novels, is the record of a manful and persistent struggle to escape from the mire of Grub Street. During that period he was studying the law with the energy of a young student; redeeming the office of magistrate from the discredit into which it had fallen in the hands of fee-hunting predecessors; considering seriously, and making practical proposals to remedy, the evils which then made the lowest social strata a hell upon earth; sacrificing his last chances of health and life to put down with a strong hand the robbers who then infested the streets of London; and clinging with affection to his wife and children. He never got fairly clear of that lamentable slough of despond into which his follies had plunged him. His moral tone lost what delicacy it had once possessed; he had not the strength which enabled Johnson to gain elevation even from the temptations which then beset the unlucky "author by profession." Some literary

hacks of the day escaped only by selling themselves, body and soul; others sank into misery and vice, like poor Boyce, a fragment of whose poem has been preserved by Fielding, and who appears in literary history scribbling for pay in a sack arranged to represent a shirt. Fielding never let go his hold of the firm land, though he must have felt through life like one whose feet are always plunging into a hopeless quagmire. To describe him as a mere reckless Bohemian, is to overlook the main facts of his story. He was manly to the last, not in the sense in which man means animal; but with the manliness of one who struggles bravely to redeem early errors, and who knows the value of independence, purity, and domestic affection. The scanty ancedotes which do duty for his biography reveal little of his true life. We know, indeed, from a spiteful and obviously exaggerated story of Horace Walpole's, that he once had a very poor supper in doubtful company; and from another ancedote, of slightly apocryphal flavour, that he once gave to "friendship" the money which ought to have been given to the collector of rates. But really to know the man, we must go to his books.

What did Fielding learn of the world which had treated him so roughly? That the world must be

composed of fools because it did not bow before his genius, or of knaves because it did not reward his honesty? Men of equal ability have drawn both those and the contradictory conclusions from experience. Human nature, as philosophers assure us, varies little from age to age; but the pictures drawn by the best observers vary so strangely as to convince us that a portrait depends as much upon the artist as upon the sitter. One can see nothing but the baser, and another nothing but the nobler, passions. To one the world is like a masque representing the triumph of vice; and another placidly assures us that virtue is always rewarded by peace of mind, and that even the temporary prosperity of the wicked is an illusion. On one canvas we see a few great heroes stand out from a multitude of pygmies; on its rival, giants and dwarfs appear to have pretty much the same stature. The world is a scene of unrestrained passions, impelling their puppets into collision or alliance without intelligible design; or a scene of domestic order, where an occasional catastrophe interferes as little with ordinary lives as a comet with the solar system. Blind fate governs one world of the imagination, and beneficent Providence another. The theories embodied in poetry vary as widely as the philosophies on which they are founded; and to phil-

osophise is to declare the fundamental assumptions of half the wise men of the world to be transparent fallacies.

We need not here attempt to reconcile these apparent contradictions. As little need we attempt to settle Fielding's philosophy, for it resembles the snakes in Iceland. It seems to have been his opinion that philosophy is, as a rule, a fine word for humbug. That was a common conviction of his day; but his acceptance of it doubtless indicates the limits of his power. In his pages we have the shrewdest observation of man in his domestic relations; but we scarcely come into contact with man as he appears in presence of the infinite, and therefore with the deepest thoughts and loftiest imaginings of the great poets and philosophers. Fielding remains inflexibly in the regions of common-sense and every-day experience. But he has given an emphatic opinion of that part of the world which was visible to him, and it is one worth knowing. In a remarkable conversation, reported in Boswell, Burke and Johnson, two of the greatest of Fielding's contemporaries, seem to have agreed that they had found men less just and more generous than they could have imagined. People begin by judging the world from themselves, and it is therefore natural that two men of

great intellectual power should have expected from their fellows a more than average adherence to settled principles. Thus Johnson and Burke discovered that reason, upon which justice depends, has less influence than a young reasoner is apt to fancy. On the other hand, they discovered that the blind instincts by which the mass is necessarily guided are not so bad as they are represented by the cynics. The Rochefoucauld or Mandeville who passes off his smart sayings upon the public as serious, knows better than anybody that a man must be a fool to take them literally. The wisdom which he affects is very easily learnt, and is more often the product of the premature sagacity dear to youth than of a ripened judgment. Good-hearted men, at least, like Johnson and Burke, shake off cynicism whilst others are acquiring it.

Fielding's verdict seems to differ at first sight. He undoubtedly lays great stress upon the selfishness of mankind. He seldom admits of an apparently generous action without showing its alloy of selfish motive, and sometimes showing that it is a mere cloak for selfish motives. In a characteristic passage of his "Voyage to Lisbon" he applies his theory to his own case. When the captain falls on his knees, he will not suffer a brave man and an old man to remain for a moment in that posture, but forgives him at once. He hastens, how-

ever, utterly to disclaim all praise, on the ground that his true motive was simply the convenience of forgiveness. "If men were wiser," he adds, "they would be oftener influenced by that motive." This kind of inverted hypocrisy, which may be graceful in a man's own case (for nobody will doubt that Fielding was less guided by calculation than he asserts), is not so graceful when applied to his neighbours. And perhaps some readers may hold that Fielding pitches the average strain of human motive too low. I should rather surmise that he substantially agrees with Johnson and Burke. The fact that most men attend a good deal to their own interests is one of the primary data of life. It is a thing at which we have no more right to be astonished than at the fact that even saints and martyrs have to eat and drink like other persons, or that a sound digestion is the foundation of much moral excellence. It is one of those facts which people of a romantic turn of mind may choose to overlook, but which no honest observer of life can seriously deny. Our conduct is determined through some thirty points of the compass by our own interest; and, happily, through at least nine-and-twenty of those points is rightfully so determined. Each man is forced, by an unavoidable necessity, to look after his own and his children's bread-and-butter, and to spend most of his efforts on

that innocent end. So long as he does not pursue his interests wrongfully, nor remain dead to other calls when they happen, there is little cause for complaint, and certainly there is none for surprise.

Fielding recognises, but never exaggerates, this homely truth. He has a hearty and generous belief in the reality of good impulses, and the existence of thoroughly unselfish men. The main actors in his world are not, as in Balzac's, mere hideous incarnations of selfishness. The superior sanity of his mind keeps him from nightmares, if its calmness is unfavourable to lofty visions. With Balzac, women like Lady Bellaston become the rule instead of the exception, and their evil passions are the dominant forces in society. Fielding, though he recognises their existence, tells us plainly that they are exceptional. Society, he says, is as moral as ever it was, and given more to frivolity than to vice[1]—a statement judiciously overlooked by some of the critics who want to make graphic history out of his novels. Fielding's mind had gathered coarseness, but it had not been poisoned. He sees how many ugly things are covered by the superficial gloss of fashion, but he does not condescend to travesty the facts in order to gratify a morbid

[1] See "Tom Jones," book xiv. chap. i.

taste for the horrible. When he wants a good man or woman he knows where to find them, and paints from Allen or his own wife with obvious sincerity and hearty sympathy. He is less anxious to exhibit human selfishness than to show us that an alloy of generosity is to be found even amidst base motives. Some of his happiest touches are illustrations of this doctrine. His villains (with a significant exception) are never monsters. They have some touch of human emotion. No desert, according to him, is so bare but that some sweet spring blends with its brackish waters. His grasping landladies have genuine movements of sympathy; and even the scoundrelly Black George, the gamekeeper, is anxious to do Tom Jones a good turn, without risk, of course, to his own comfort, by way of compensation for previous injuries. It is this impartial insight into the ordinary texture of human motive that gives a certain solidity and veracity to Fielding's work. We are always made to feel that the actions spring fairly and naturally from the character of his persons, not from the exigencies of his story or the desire to be effective. The one great difficulty in "Tom Jones" is the assumption that the excellent Allworthy should have been deceived for years by the hypocrite Blifil, and blind to the substantial kindliness of his ward.

Here we may fancy that Fielding has been forced to be unnatural by his plot. Yet he suggests a satisfactory solution with admirable skill. Allworthy is prejudiced in favour of Blifil by the apparently unjust prejudice of Blifil's mother in favour of the jovial Tom. A generous man may easily become blind to the faults of a supposed victim of maternal injustice; and even here Fielding fairly escapes from the blame due to ordinary novelists, who invent impossible misunderstandings in order to bring about intricate perplexities.

Blifil is perhaps the one case (for Jonathan Wild is a satire, not a history, or, as M. Taine fancies, a tract) in which Fielding seems to lose his unvarying coolness of judgment; and the explanation is obvious. The one fault to which he is, so to speak, unjust, is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy, indeed, cannot well be painted too black, but it should not be made impossible. When Fielding has to deal with such a character, he for once loses his self-command, and, like inferior writers, begins to be angry with his creatures. Instead of analysing and explaining, he simply reviles and leaves us in presence of a moral anomaly. Blifil is not more wicked than Iago, but we seem to understand the psychical chemistry by which an Iago is compounded; whereas Blifil can only be regarded as a devil (if the word be not too

dignified) who does not really belong to this world at all. The error, though characteristic of a man whose great intellectual merit is his firm grasp of realities, and whose favourite virtue is his downright sincerity, is not the less a blemish. Hatred of pedantry too easily leads to hatred of culture, and hatred of hypocrisy to distrust of the more exalted virtues. Fielding cannot be just to motives lying rather outside his ordinary sphere of thought. He can mock heartily and pleasantly enough at the affectation of philosophy, as in the case where Parson Adams, urging poor Joseph Andrews, by considerations drawn from the Bible and from Seneca, to be ready to resign his Fanny "peaceably, quietly, and contentedly," suddenly hears of the supposed loss of his own little child, and is called upon to act instead of preaching. But his satire upon all characters and creeds which embody the more exalted strains of feeling is apt to be indiscriminate. A High Churchman, according to him, is a Pharisee who prefers orthodoxy to virtue; a Methodist a mere mountebank, who counterfeits spiritual raptures to impose upon dupes; a Freethinker is a man who weaves a mask of fine phrases, under which to cover his aversion to the restraints of religion. Fielding's religion consists chiefly of a solid homespun morality, and he is more suspicious of an

excessive than of a defective zeal. Similarly he is a hearty Whig, but no revolutionist. He has as hearty a contempt for the cant about liberty[1] as Dr. Johnson himself, and has very stringent remedies to propose for regulating the mob. The bailiff in "Amelia," who, whilst he brutally maltreats the unlucky prisoners for debt, swaggers about the British Constitution, and swears that he is "all for liberty," recalls the boatman who ridiculed French slavery to Voltaire, and was carried off next day by a pressgang. Fielding, indeed, is no fanatical adherent of our blessed Constitution, which, as he says, has been pronounced by some of our wisest men to be too perfect to be altered in any particular, and which a number of the said wisest men have been mending ever since. He hates cant on all sides impartially, though, as a sound Whig, he specially hates Papists and Jacobites as the most offensive of all Pharisees, marked for detestation by their taste for frogs and French wine in preference to punch and roast beef. He is a patriotic Briton, whose patriotism takes the genuine shape of a hearty growl at English abuses, with a tacit assumption that things are worse elsewhere.

[1] See "Voyage to Lisbon" (July 21st) for some very good remarks upon this word, which, as he says, no two men understand in the same sense.

The reflection of this quality of solid good sense, absolutely scorning any aliment except that of solid facts, is the so-called realism of Fielding's novels. He is, indeed, as hearty a realist as Hogarth, whose congenial art he is never tired of praising with all the cordiality of his nature, and to whom he refers his readers for portraits of several characters in "Tom Jones." His scenery is as realistic as a photograph. Tavern kitchens, spunging-house parlours, the back-slums of London streets, are drawn from the realities with unflinching vigour. We see the stains of beer-pots and smell the fumes of stale tobacco as distinctly as in Hogarth's engravings. He shrinks neither from the coarse nor the absolutely disgusting. It is enough to recall the female boxing or scratching matches which are so frequent in his pages. On one such occasion his language seems to imply that he had watched such battles in the spirit of a connoisseur in our own day watching less inexpressibly disgusting prize-fights. Certainly we could wish that, if such scenes were to be depicted, there might have been a clearer proof that the artist had a nose and eyes capable of feeling offence.

But the nickname "realist" slides easily into another sense. The realist is sometimes supposed to be more shallow as well as more prosaic than the idealist; to be

content with the outside where the idealist pierces to the heart. He gives the bare fact, where his rival gives the idea symbolized by the fact, and therefore rendering it attractive to the higher intellect. Fielding's view of his own art is instructive in this as in other matters. Poetic invention, he says, is generally taken to be a creative faculty; and if so, it is the peculiar property of the romance-writers, who frankly take leave of the actual and possible. Fielding disavows all claim to this faculty; he writes histories, not romances. But, in his sense, poetic invention means, not creation, but "discovery;" that is, "a quick, sagacious penetration into the true essence of all objects of our contemplation." Perhaps we may say that it is chiefly a question of method whether a writer should portray men or angels—the beings, that is, of everyday life—or beings placed under a totally different set of circumstances. The more vital question is whether, by one method or the other, he shows us a man's heart or only his clothes; whether he appeals to our intellects or imaginations, or amuses us by images which do not sink below the eye. In scientific writings a man may give us the true law of a phenomenon, whether he exemplifies it in extreme or average cases, in the orbit of a comet or the fall of an apple. The romance-writer should show us what real

men would be in dreamland, the writer of "histories" what they are on the knife-board of an omnibus. True insight may be shown in either case, or may be absent in either, according as the artist deals with the deepest organic laws or the more external accidents. The "Ancient Mariner" is an embodiment of certain simple emotional phases and moral laws amidst the phantasmagoric incidents of a dream, and De Foe does not interpret them better because he confines himself to the most prosaic incidents. When romance becomes really arbitrary, and is parted from all basis of observation, it loses its true interest and deserves Fielding's condemnation. Fielding conscientiously aims at discharging the highest function. He describes, as he says in "Joseph Andrews," "not men, but manners; not an individual, but a species." His lawyer, he tells us, has been alive for the last four thousand years, and will probably survive four thousand more. Mrs. Tow-wouse lives wherever turbulent temper, avarice, and insensibility are united; and her sneaking husband wherever a good inclination has glimmered forth, eclipsed by poverty of spirit and understanding. But the type which shows best the force and the limits of Fielding's genius is Parson Adams. He belongs to a distinguished family, whose members have been portrayed by the greatest

historians. He is a collateral descendant of Don Quixote, for whose creation Fielding felt a reverence exceeded only by his reverence for Shakespeare.[1] The resemblance is, of course, distant, and consists chiefly in this, that the parson, like the knight, lives in an ideal world, and is constantly shocked by harsh collision with facts. He believes in his sermons instead of his sword, and his imagination is tenanted by virtuous

[1] In his interesting Life of Godwin, Mr. Paul claims for his hero (I believe rightly) that he was the first English writer to give a "lengthy and appreciative notice" of "Don Quixote." But when he infers that Godwin was also the first English writer who recognised in Cervantes a great humorist, satirist, moralist, and artist, he seems to me to overlook Fielding and others. So Warton in his essay on "Pope" calls "Don Quixote" the "most original and unrivalled work of modern times." The book must have been popular in England from its publication, as we know from the preface to Beaumont and Fletcher's "Knight of the Burning Castle;" and numerous translations and imitations show that Cervantes was always enjoyed, if not critised. Fieldings frequent references to "Don Quixote" (to say nothing of his play, "Don Quixote in England") imply an admiration fully as warm as that of Godwin. "Don Quixote," says Fielding, is more worthy the name of history than Mariana, and he always speaks of Cervantes in the tone of an affectionate disciple. Fielding, I will add, seems to me to have admired Shakespeare more heartily and intelligently than ninety-nine out of a hundred modern supporters of Shakespeare societies; though these gentlemen are never happier than when depreciating English eighteenth-century critics to exalt vapid German philosophising. Fielding's favourite play seems from his quotations to have been "Othello."

squires and model parsons instead of Arcadian shepherds, or knight-errants and fair ladies. His imagination is not exalted beyond the limits of sanity, but only colours the prosaic realities in accordance with the impulses of a tranquil benevolence. If the theme be fundamentally similar, it is treated with a far less daring hand.

Adams is much more closely related to Sir Roger de Coverley, the Vicar of Wakefield, or Uncle Toby. Each of these lovable beings invites us at once to sympathise with and to smile at the unaffected simplicity which, seeing no evil, becomes half ludicrous and half pathetic in this corrupt world. Adams stands out from his brethren by his intense reality. If he smells too distinctly of beer and tobacco, we believe in him more firmly than in the less full-blooded creations of Sterne and Goldsmith. Parson Adams, indeed, has a startling vigour of organisation. Not merely the hero of a modern ritualist novel, but Amyas Leigh or Guy Livingstone himself might have been amazed at his athletic prowess. He stalks ahead of the stage-coach (favoured doubtless by the bad roads of the period) as though he had accepted the modern principle about fearing God and walking a thousand miles in a thousand hours. His mutton fist and the crabtree

cudgel which swings so freely round his clerical head would have daunted the contemporary gladiators, Slack and Broughton. He shows his Christian humility not merely by familiarity with his poorest parishioners, but in sitting up whole nights in tavern kitchens, drinking unlimited beer, smoking inextinguishable pipes, and revelling in a ceaseless flow of gossip. We smile at the good man's intense delight in a love-story, at the simplicity which makes him see a good Samaritan in Parson Trulliber, at the absence of mind which makes him pitch his Æschylus into the fire, or walk a dozen miles in profound oblivion of the animal which should have been between his knees; but his contemporaries were provoked to a horse-laugh, and when we remark the tremendous practical jokes which his innocence suggests to them, we admit that he requires his whole athletic vigour to bring so tender a heart safely through so rough a world.

If the ideal hero is always to live in fancy-land and talk in blank verse, Adams has clearly no right to the title; nor, indeed, has Don Quixote. But the masculine portraiture of the coarse realities is not only indicative of intellectual vigour, but artistically appropriate. The contrast between the world and its simple-minded inhabitant is the more forcible in proportion to the

firmness and solidity of Fielding's touch. Uncle Toby proves that Sterne had preserved enough tenderness to make an exquisite plaything of his emotions. The Vicar of Wakefield proves that Goldsmith had preserved a childlike innocence of imagination, and could retire from duns and publishers to an idyllic world of his own. Joseph Andrews proves that Fielding was neither a child nor a sentimentalist, but that he had learnt to face facts as they are, and set a true value on the best elements of human life. In the midst of vanity and vexation of spirit he could find some comfort in pure and strong domestic affection. He can indulge his feelings without introducing the false note of sentimentalism, or condescending to tone his pictures with rose-colour. He wants no illusions. The exemplary Dr. Harrison in "Amelia" held no action unworthy of him which could protect an innocent person or "bring a rogue to the gallows." Good Parson Adams could lay his cudgel on the back of a villain with hearty goodwill. He believes too easily in human goodness, but there is not a maudlin fibre in his whole body. He would not be the man to cry over a dead donkey whilst children are in want of bread. He would be slower than the excellent Dr. Primrose to believe in the reformation of a villain by fine phrases, and if he fell into

such a weakness, his biographer would not, like Goldsmith, be inclined to sanction the error. A villain is induced to reform, indeed, by the sight of Amelia's excellence, but Fielding is careful to tell us that the change was illusory, and that the villain ended on a gallows. We are made sensible that if Adams had his fancies they were foibles, and therefore sources of misfortune. We are to admire the childlike character, but not to share its illusions. The world is not made of moonshine. Hypocrisy, cruelty, avarice, and lust have to be stamped out by hard blows, not cured by delicate infusion of graceful sentimentalisms.

So far Fielding's portrait of an ideal character is all the better for his masculine grasp of fact. It must, however, be admitted that he fails a little on the other side of the contrast. He believes in a good heart, but scarcely in very lofty motive. He tells us in "Tom Jones"[1] that he has painted no perfect character, because he never happened to meet one. His stories, like "Vanity Fair," may be described as novels without a hero. It is not merely that his characters are imperfect, but that they are deficient in the finer ingredients which go to make up the nearest approximations of our imperfect natures to heroism. Colonel Newcome was

[1] Book x. chap. i.

not perhaps so good a man as Parson Adams, but he had a certain delicacy of sentiment which led him, as we may remember, to be rather hard upon Tom Jones, and which Fielding (as may be gathered from Bath in "Amelia") would have been inclined to ridicule. Parson Adams is simple enough to become a laughing-stock to the brutal, but he never consciously rebels against the dictates of the plainest common-sense. His theology comes from Tillotson and Hoadly; he has no eye for the romantic side of his creed, and would be apt to condemn a mystic as simply a fool. His loftiest aspiration is not to reform the world or any part of it, but to get a modest bit of preferment (he actually receives it, we are happy to think, in "Amelia"), enough to pay for his tobacco and his children's schooling. Fielding's dislike to the romantic makes him rather blind to the elevated. He will not only start from the actual, but does not conceive the possibility of an infusion of loftier principles. The existing standard of sound sense prescribes an impassable limit to his imagination. Parson Adams is an admirable incarnation of certain excellent and honest impulses. He sets forth the wisdom of the heart and the beauty of the simple instincts of an affectionate nature. But we are forced to admit that he is not the highest type conceivable, and might, for example,

learn something from his less robust colleague Dr. Primrose.

This remark suggests the common criticism, expounded with his usual brilliancy by M. Taine. Fielding, he tells us, loves nature, but he does not love it "like the great impartial artists, Shakespeare and Goethe." He moralises incessantly—which is wrong. Moreover, his morality appears to be very questionable. It consists in preferring instinct to reason. The hero is the man who is born generous as a dog is born affectionate. And this, says M. Taine, might be all very well were it not for a great omission. Fielding has painted nature, but nature without refinement, poetry, and chivalry. He can only describe the impetuosity of the senses, not the nervous exaltation and the poetic rapture. Man is with him "a good buffalo; and perhaps he is the hero required by a people which is itself called John Bull." In all which there is an undoubted vein of truth. Fielding's want of refinement, for example, is one of those undeniable facts which must be taken for granted. But, without seeking to set right some other statements implied in M. Taine's judgment, it is worth while to consider a little more fully the moral aspect of Fielding's work. Much has been said upon this point by some who, with M. Taine, take Fielding

for a mere "buffalo," and by others who, like Coleridge —a far safer and more sympathetic critic—hold "Tom Jones" to be, on the whole, a sound exposition of healthy morality.

Fielding, on the "buffalo" view, is supposed to be simply taking one side in one of those perpetual controversies which has occupied many generations and never approaches a settlement. He prefers nature to law, instinct to reasoned action; he is on the side of Charles as against Joseph Surface; he admires the publican, and condemns the Pharisee without reserve; he loves the man who is nobody's enemy but his own, and despises the prudent person whose charity ends at his own doorstep. Such a doctrine—so absolutely stated—is rather a negation of all morality than a lax morality. If it implies a love of generous instincts, it denies that a man should have any regard for moral rules, which are needed precisely in order to control our spontaneous instincts. Virtue is amiable, but ceases to be meritorious. Nothing would be easier than to quote passages in which Fielding expressly repudiates such a theory; but, of course, a writer's morality must be judged by the conceptions embodied in his work, not by the maxims scattered through it. Nor, for the same reason, can we pay much attention to Fielding's express

assertion that he is writing in the interests of virtue; for Smollett, and less scrupulous writers than even Smollett, have found their account in similar protestations. Yet anybody, I think, who will compare "Joseph Andrews" with that intentionally most moral work, "Pamela," will admit that Fielding's morality goes deeper than this. Fielding at least makes us love virtue, and is incapable of the solecism which Richardson commits in substantially preaching that virtue means standing out for a higher price. That Fielding's reckless heroes have a genuine sensibility to the claims of virtue, appears still more unmistakably when we compare them with the heartless fine gentlemen of the Congreve school and of his own early plays, (or put the faulty Captain Booth beside such an unredeemed scamp as Peregrine Pickle.)

It is clear, in short, that the aim of Fielding (whether he succeeds or not) is the very reverse of that attributed to him by M. Taine. "Tom Jones" and "Amelia" have, ostensibly at least, a most emphatic moral attached to them; and not only attached to them, but borne in mind and even too elaborately preached throughout. That moral is the one which Fielding had learnt in the school of his own experience. It is the moral that dissipation bears fruit in misery. The

remorse, it is true, which was generated in Fielding and in his heroes was not the remorse which drives a man to a cloister, or which even seriously poisons his happiness. The offences against morality are condoned too easily, and the line between vice and virtue drawn in accordance with certain distinctions which even Parson Adams could scarcely have approved. Vice, he seems to say, is altogether objectionable only when complicated by cruelty or hypocrisy. But if Fielding's moral sense is not very delicate, it is vigorous. He hates most heartily what he sees to be wrong, though his sight might easily be improved in delicacy of discrimination. The truth is simply that Fielding accepted that moral code which the better men of the world in his time really acknowledged, as distinguished from that by which they affected to be bound. That so wide a distinction should generally exist between these codes is a matter for deep regret. That Fielding in his hatred for humbug should have condemned purity as puritanical is clearly lamentable. The confusion, however, was part of the man, and, as already noticed, shows itself in one shape or other throughout his work. But it would be unjust to condemn him upon that ground as antagonistic or indifferent to reasonable morality. His morality is at the superior antipodes from the

cynicism of a Wycherley; and far superior to the prurient sentimentalism of Sterne or the hot-pressed priggishness of Richardson, or even the reckless Bohemianism of Smollett.

There is a deeper question, however, beneath this discussion. The morality of those "great impartial artists" of whom M. Taine speaks, differs from Fielding's in a more serious sense. The highest morality of a great work of art depends upon the power with which the essential beauty and ugliness of virtue and vice are exhibited by an impartial observer. The morality, for example, of Goethe and Shakespeare appears in the presentation of such characters as Iago and Mephistopheles. The insight of true genius shows us by such examples what is the true physiology of vice; what is the nature of the man who has lost all faith in virtue and all sympathy with purity and nobility of character. The artist of inferior rank tries to make us hate vice by showing that it comes to a bad end precisely because he has an inadequate perception of its true nature. He can see that a drunkard generally gets into debt or incurs an attack of *delirium tremens*, but he does not exhibit the moral disintegration which is the underlying cause of the misfortune, and which may be equally fatal, even if it happens to evade the

penalty. The distinction depends upon the power of the artist to fulfil Fielding's requirement of penetrating to the essence of the objects of his contemplation. It corresponds to the distinction in philosophy between a merely prudential system of ethics—the system of the gallows and the gaol—and the system which recognises the deeper issues perceptible to a fine moral sense.

Now, in certain matters, Fielding's morality is of the merely prudential kind. It resembles Hogarth's simple doctrine that the good apprentice will be Lord Mayor and the bad apprentice get into Newgate. So shrewd an observer was indeed well aware, and could say very forcibly,[1] that virtue in this world might sometimes lead to poverty, contempt, and imprisonment. He does not, like some novelists, assume the character of a temporal Providence, and knock his evildoers on the head at the end of the story. He shows very forcibly that the difficulties which beset poor Jones and Booth are not to be fairly called accidents, but are the difficulties to which bad conduct generally leads a man, and which are all the harder when not counterbalanced by a clear conscience. He can even describe with sympathy such a character as poor Atkinson in "Amelia," whose unselfish love brings him more

1 "Tom Jones," book xv. chap. i.

blows than favours of fortune. But it is true that he is a good deal more sensible to what are called the prudential sanctions of virtue, at least of a certain category of virtues, than to its essential beauty. So far the want of refinement of which M. Taine speaks does, in fact, lower, and lower very materially, his moral perception. A man of true delicacy could never have dragged Tom Jones into his lowest degradation without showing more forcibly his abhorrence of his loose conduct. This is, as Colonel Newcome properly points out, the great and obvious blot upon the story, which no critics have missed, and we cannot even follow the leniency of Coleridge, who thinks that a single passage introduced to express Fielding's real judgment would have remedied the mischief. It is too obvious to be denied without sophistry that Tom, though he has many good feelings, and can preach very edifying sermons to his less scrupulous friend Nightingale, requires to be cast in a different mould. His whole character should have been strung to a higher pitch to make us feel that such degradation would not merely have required punishment to restore his self-complacency, but have left a craving for some thorough moral ablution.

Granting unreservedly all that may be urged upon

this point, we may still agree with the judgment pronounced by the most congenial critics. Fielding's pages reek too strongly of tobacco; they are apt to turn delicate stomachs; but the atmosphere is, on the whole, healthy and bracing. No man can read them without prejudice and fail to recognise the fact that he has been in contact with something much higher than a "good buffalo." He has learnt to know a man, not merely full of animal vigour, not merely stored with various experience of men and manners, but also in the main sound and unpoisoned by the mephitic vapours which poisoned the atmosphere of his police-office. If the scorn of hypocrisy is too fully emphasised, and the sensitiveness to ugly and revolting objects too much deadened by a rough life, yet nobody could be more heartily convinced of the beauty and value of those solid domestic instincts on which human happiness must chiefly depend. Put Fielding beside the modern would-be satirists who make society—especially French society[1]—a mere sink of nastiness, or beside the more virtuous persons whose favourite affectation is simplicity, and who labour most spasmodically to be masculine, and his native vigour, his massive common-sense, his

[1] For Fielding's view of the French novels of his day see "Tom Jones," book xiii. chap. ix.

wholesome views of men and manners, stand out in solid relief. Certainly he was limited in perception, and not so elevated in tone as might be desired; but he is a fitting representative of the stalwart vigour and the intellectual shrewdness evident in the best men of his time. The English domestic life of the period was certainly far from blameless, and anything but refined; but, if we have gained in some ways, we are hardly entitled to look with unqualified disdain upon the rough vigour of our beer-drinking, beef-eating ancestors.

We have felt, indeed, the limitations of Fielding's art more clearly since English fiction found a new starting-point in Scott. Scott made us sensible of many sources of interest to which Fielding was naturally blind. He showed us especially that a human being belonged to a society going through a long course of historical development, and renewed the bonds with the past which had been rudely snapped in Fielding's period. Fielding only deals, it may be roughly said, with men as members of a little family circle, whereas Scott shows them as members of a nation rich in old historical traditions, related to the past and the future, and to the external nature in which it has been developed. A wider set of forces is introduced into our conception of humanity, and the romantic element, which Fielding

ignored, comes again to life. Scott, too, was a greater man than Fielding, of wider sympathy, loftier character, and, not the least, with an incomparably keener ear for the voices of the mountains, the sea, and the sky. The more Scott is studied, the higher, I believe, the opinion that we shall form of some of his powers. But in one respect Fielding is his superior. It is a kind of misnomer which classifies Scott's books as novels. They are embodied legends and traditions, descriptions of men, and races, and epochs of history; but they are novels, as it were, by accident, and modern readers are often disappointed because the name suggests misleading associations. They expect to sympathise with Scott's heroes, whereas the heroes are generally dropped in from without, just to give ostensible continuity to the narrative. The apparent accessories are really the main substance. The Jacobites and not Waverley, the Borderers, not Mr. Van Beest Brown, the Covenanters, not Morton or Lord Evandale, are the real subject of Scott's best romances. The "Bride of Lammermoor" is almost the sole exception to the general rule. Now Fielding is really a novelist in the more natural sense. We are interested, that is, by the main characters, though they are not always the most attractive in themselves. We are really absorbed by the play of their

passions and the conflict of their motives, and not merely taking advantage of the company to see the surrounding scenery or phases of social life. In this sense Fielding's art is admirable, and surpassed that of all his English predecessors as of most of his successors. If the light is concentrated in a narrow focus, it is still healthy daylight. So long as we do not wish to leave his circle of ideas, we see little fault in the vigour with which he fulfils his intention. And therefore, whatever Fielding's other faults, he is beyond comparison the most faithful and profound mouthpiece of the passions and failings of a society which seems at once strangely remote and yet strangely near to us. When seeking to solve that curious problem which is discussed in one of Hazlitt's best essays—what characters one would most like to have met?—and running over the various claims of a meeting at the Mermaid with Shakespeare and Jonson, a "neat repast of Attic taste" with Milton, a gossip at Button's with Addison and Steele, a club-dinner with Johnson and Burke, a supper with Lamb, or (certainly the least attractive) an evening at Holland House, I sometimes fancy that, after all, few things would be pleasanter than a pipe and a bowl of punch with Fielding and Hogarth. It is true that for such a purpose I provide myself in imagination with a new set

of sturdy nerves, and with a digestion such as that which was once equal to the horrors of an undergraduates' "wine party." But, having made that trifling assumption, I fancy that there would be few places where one would hear more good motherwit, shrewder judgments of men and things, or a sounder appreciation of those homely elements of which human life is in fact chiefly composed. Common sense in the highest degree—whether we choose to identify it or contrast it with genius—is at least one of the most enduring and valuable of qualities in literature as everywhere else; and Fielding is one of its best representatives. But perhaps one is unduly biassed by the charm of a complete escape in imagination from the thousand and one affectations which have grown up since Fielding died and we have all become so much wiser and more learned than all previous generations.

III.

COWPER AND ROUSSEAU.

SAINTE-BEUVE'S Essay on Cowper—considered as the type of domestic poets—has recently been translated for the benefit of English readers. It is interesting to know on the highest authority what are the qualities which may recommend a writer, so strongly tinged by local prejudices, to the admiration of a different race and generation. The gulf which separates the Olney of a century back from modern Paris is wide enough to give additional value to the generous appreciation of the critic. I have not the presumption to supplement or correct any part of his judgment. It is enough to remark briefly that Cowper's immediate popularity was, as is usually the case, due in part to qualities which have little to do with his more enduring reputation. Sainte-Bueve dwells with special fondness upon his pictures of domestic and rural life. He notices, of course, the marvellous keenness of his pathetic poems;

and he touches, though with some hint that national affinity is necessary to its full appreciation, upon the playful humour which immortalised John Gilpin, and lights up the poet's most-charming letters. Something, perhaps, might still be said by a competent critic upon the singular charm of Cowper's best style. A poet, for example, might perhaps tell us, though a prosaic person cannot, what is the secret of the impression made by such a poem as the "Wreck of the Royal George." Given an ordinary newspaper paragraph about wreck or battle, turn it into the simplest possible language, do not introduce a single metaphor or figure of speech, indulge in none but the most obvious of all reflections—as, for example, that when a man is once drowned he won't win any more battles—and produce as the result a copy of verses which nobody can ever read without instantly knowing them by heart. How Cowper managed to perform such a feat, and why not one poet even in a hundred can perform it, are questions which might lead to some curious critical speculation.

The qualities, however, which charm the purely literary critic do not account for the whole of Cowper's influence. A great part of his immediate, and some part of his more enduring success, have been clearly

owing to a different cause. On reading Johnson's "Lives," Cowper remarked, rather uncharitably, that there was scarcely one good man amongst the poets. Few poets, indeed, shared those religious views which commended him more than any literary excellence to a large class of readers. Religious poetry is generally popular out of all proportion to its æsthetic merits. Young was but a second-rate Pope in point of talent; but probably the "Night Thoughts" have been studied by a dozen people for one who has read the "Essay on Man" or the "Imitations of Horace." In our own day, nobody, I suppose, would hold that the popularity of the "Christian Year" has been strictly proportioned to its poetical excellence; and Cowper's vein of religious meditation has recommended him to thousands who, if biassed at all, were quite unconsciously biassed by the admirable qualities which endeared him to such a critic as Sainte-Beuve. His own view was frequently and unequivocally expressed. He says over and over again—and his entire sincerity lifts him above all suspicion of the affected self-depreciation of other writers—that he looked upon his poetical work as at best innocent trifling, except so far as his poems were versified sermons. His intention was everywhere didactic—sometimes annoyingly didactic—and his highest am-

bition was to be a useful auxiliary to the prosaic exhortations of Doddridge, Watts, or his friend Newton. His religion, said some people, drove him mad. Even a generous critic like Mr. Stopford Brooke cannot refrain from hinting that his madness was in some part due to the detested influence of Calvinism. In fact, it may be admitted that Newton—who is half inclined to boast that he has a name for driving people mad—scarcely showed his judgment in setting a man who had already been in confinement to write hymns which at times are the embodiment of despair. But it is obviously contrary to the plainest facts to say that Cowper was driven mad by his creed. His first attack preceded his religious enthusiasm; and a gentleman who tries to hang himself because he has received a comfortable appointment for life, is in a state of mind which may be explained without reference to his theological views. It would be truer to say that when Cowper's intellect was once unhinged, he found a congenial expression for the tortures of his soul in the imagery provided by the sternest of Christian sects. But neither can this circumstance be alleged as in itself disparaging to the doctrines thus misapplied. A religious belief which does not provide language for the darkest moods of the human mind, for profound

melancholy, torturing remorse and gloomy foreboding, is a religion not calculated to lay a powerful grasp upon the imaginations of mankind. Had Cowper been a Roman Catholic, the same anguish of mind might have driven him to seek relief in the recesses of some austere monastery. Had he, like Rousseau, been a theoretical optimist, he would, like Rousseau, have tortured himself with the conflict between theory and fact,—between the world as it might be and the corrupt and tyrannous world as it is—and have held that all men were in a conspiracy to rob him of his peace. The chief article of Rousseau's rather hazy creed was the duty of universal philanthropy, and Rousseau fancied himself to be the object of all men's hatred. Similarly, Cowper, who held that the first duty of man was the love of God, fancied that some mysterious cause had made him the object of the irrevocable hatred of his Creator. With such fancies, reason and creeds which embody reason have nothing to do except to give shape to the instruments of self-torture. The cause of the misery is the mind diseased. You can no more raze out its rooted troubles by arguing against the reality of the phantoms which it generates than cure any other delirium by the most irrefragable logic.

Sainte-Beuve makes some remarks upon this analogy

between Rousseau and Cowper. The comparison suggests some curious considerations as to the contrast and likeness of the two cases represented. Some personal differences are, of course, profound and obvious. Cowper was as indisputably the most virtuous man, as Rousseau the greatest intellectual power. Cowper's domestic life was as beautiful as Rousseau's was repulsive. Rousseau, moreover, was more decidedly a sentimentalist than Cowper, if by sentimentalism we mean that disposition which makes a luxury of grief, and delights in poring over its own morbid emotions. Cowper's tears are always wrung from him by intense anguish of soul, and never, as is occasionally the case with Rousseau, suggests that the weeper is proud of his excessive tenderness. Nevertheless, it is probably true, as Mr. Lowell says, that Cowper is the nearest congener of Rousseau in our language. The two men, of course, occupy in one respect an analogous literary position. We habitually assign to Cowper an important place—though of course a subordinate place to Rousseau—in bringing about the reaction against the eighteenth-century code of taste and morality. In each case it would generally be said that the change indicated was a return to nature and passion from the artificial coldness of the dominant school. That

reaction, whatever its precise nature, took characteristically different forms in England and in France; and it is as illustrating one of the most important distinctions that I propose to say a few words upon the contrast thus exhibited.

Return to Nature! That was the war-cry which animated the Lake school in their assault upon the then established authority. Pope, as they held, had tied the hands of English poets by his jingling metres and frigid conventionalties. The muse—to make use of the old-fashioned phrase—had been rouged and bewigged, and put into high-heeled boots, till she had lost the old majestic freedom of gait and energy of action. Let us go back to our ancient school, to Milton and Shakespeare and Spenser and Chaucer, and break the ignoble fetters imported from the pseudo-classicists of France. These and similar phrases, repeated and varied in a thousand forms, have become part of the stock in trade of literary historians, and are put forward so fluently that we sometimes forget to ask what it is precisely that they mean. Down to Milton, it is assumed, we were natural; then we became artificial; and with the Revolution we became natural again. That a theory so generally received and so consciously adopted by the leaders of the new move-

ment must have in it a considerable amount of truth, is not to be disputed. But it is sometimes not easy to interpret it into very plain language. The method of explaining great intellectual and social movements by the phrase "reaction" is a very tempting one, for the simple reason that it enables us to effect a great saving of thought. The change is made to explain itself. History becomes a record of oscillations; we are always swinging backwards and forwards, pendulum fashion, from one extreme to another. The courtiers of Charles II. were too dissolute because the Puritans were too strict; Addison and Steele were respectable because Congreve and Wycherley were licentious; Wesley was zealous because the Church had become indifferent; the Revolution of 1789 was a reaction against the manners of the last century, and the Revolution in running its course set up a reaction against itself. Now it is easy enough to admit that there is some truth in this theory. Every great man who moves his race profoundly is of necessity protesting against the worst evils of the time, and it is as true as a copybook that zeal leads to extremes, and one extreme to its opposite. A river flowing through a nearly level plain turns its concavity alternately to the east and west, and we may fairly explain each bend

by the fact that the previous bend was in the opposite direction. But that does not explain why the river flows down-hill, nor show which direction tends downwards. We may account for trifling oscillations, not for the main current. Nor does it seem at first a self-evident proposition that vice, for example, necessarily generates over-strictness. A man is not always a Pharisee because his father has been a sinner. In fact, the people who talk so fluently about reaction fall back whenever it suits them upon the inverse theory. If a process happens to be continuous, the reason is as simple and satisfactory as in the opposite case. A man is dissolute, they will tell us, because his father was dissolute; just as they will tell us, in the opposite case, that he was dissolute because his father was strict. Obviously, the mere statement of a reaction is not by itself satisfactory. We want to know why there should have been a reaction; why the code of morals which satisfied one generation did not satisfy its successors; why the coming man was repelled rather than attracted; what it was that made Pope array himself in a wig instead of appreciating the noble freedom of his predecessors; and why, again, at a given period men became tired of the old wig business. When we have solved, or approximated to a solution

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of, that problem, we shall generally find, I suspect, that the action and reaction are generally more superficial phenomena than we suppose, and that the great processes of evolution are going on beneath the surface comparatively undisturbed by the changes which first attract our notice. Every man naturally exaggerates the share of his education due to himself. He fancies that he has made a wonderful improvement upon his father's views, perhaps by reversing the improvement made by the father on the grandfather's. He does not see, what is plain enough to a more distant generation, that in reality each generation is most closely bound to its nearest predecessors.

There is, too, a special source of ambiguity in the catchword used by the revolutionary school. They spoke of a return to nature. What, to ask once more a very troublesome question, is meant by nature? Does it mean inanimate nature? If so, is a love of nature clearly good or "natural"? Was Wordsworth justifiable *primâ facie* for telling us to study mountains rather than Pope for announcing that

> The proper study of mankind is man?

Is it not more natural to be interested in men than in mountains? Does nature include man in his natural

state? If so, what is the natural state of man? Is the savage the man of nature, or the unsophisticated peasant, or the man whose natural powers are developed to the highest pitch? Is a native of the Andaman Islands the superior of Socrates? If you admit that Socrates is superior to the savage, where do you draw the line between the natural and the artificial? If a coral reef is natural and beautiful because it is the work of insects, and a town artificial and ugly because made by man, we must reject as unnatural all the best products of the human race. If you distinguish between different works of man, the distinction becomes irrelevant, for the products to which we most object are just as natural, in any assignable sense of the word, as those which we most admire. The word natural may indeed be used as equivalent simply to beneficial or healthy; but then it loses all value as an implicit test of what is and what is not beneficial. Probably, indeed, some such sense was floating before the minds of most who have used the term. We shall generally find a vague recognition of the fact that there is a continuous series of integrating and disintegrating processes; that some changes imply a normal development of the social or individual organism leading to increased health and strength, whilst others are signifi-

cant of disease and ultimate obliteration or decay of structure. Thus the artificial style of the Pope school, the appeals to the muse, the pastoral affectation, and so forth, may be called unnatural, because the philosophy of that style is the retention of obsolete symbols after all vitality has departed, and when they consequently become mere obstructions, embarrassing the free flow of emotion which they once stimulated.

But, however this may be, it is plain that the very different senses given to the word nature by different schools of thought were characteristic of profoundly different conceptions of the world and its order. There is a sense in which it may be said with perfect accuracy that the worship of nature, so far from being a fresh doctrine of the new school, was the most characteristic tenet of the school from which it dissented. All the speculative part of the English literature in the first half of the eighteenth century is a prolonged discussion as to the meaning and value of the law of nature, the religion of nature, and the state of nature. The deist controversy, which occupied every one of the keenest thinkers of the time, turned essentially upon this problem: granting that there is an ascertainable and absolutely true religion of nature, what is its relation to revealed religion? That, for example, is the question explicitly

discussed in Butler's typical book, which gives the pith of the whole orthodox argument, and the same speculation suggested the theme of Pope's "Essay on Man," which, in its occasional strength and its many weaknesses, is perhaps the most characteristic, though far from the most valuable, product of the time. The religion of nature undoubtedly meant something very different with Butler or Pope from what it would have meant with Wordsworth or Coleridge—something so different, indeed, that we might at first say that the two creeds had nothing in common but the name. But we may see from Rousseau that there was a real and intimate connection. Rousseau's philosophy, in fact, is taken bodily from the teaching of his English predecessors. His celebrated profession of faith through the lips of the Vicaire Savoyard, which delighted Voltaire and profoundly influenced the leaders of the French Revolution, is in fact the expression of a deism identical with that of Pope's essay.[1] The political theories of the Social Contract are founded upon the same base which served Locke and the English political theorists of 1688; and are applied to sanction the

[1] Rousseau himself seems to refer to Clarke, the leader of the English rationalising school, as the best expounder of his theory, and defended Pope's Essay against the criticisms of Voltaire.

attempt to remodel existing societies in accordance with what they would have called the law of nature. It is again perfectly true that Rousseau drew from his theory consequences which inspired Robespierre, and would have made Locke's hair stand on end; and that Pope would have been scandalised at the too open revelation of his religious tendencies. It is also true that Rousseau's passion was of infinitely greater importance than his philosophy. But it remains true that the logical framework into which his theories were fitted came to him straight from the same school of thought which was dominant in England during the preceding period. The real change effected by Rousseau was that he breathed life into the dead bones. The English theorists, as has been admirably shown by Mr. Morley in his "Rousseau," acted after their national method. They accepted doctrines which, if logically developed, would have led to a radical revolution, and therefore refused to develop them logically. They remained in their favourite attitude of compromise, and declined altogether to accommodate practice to theory. Locke's political principles fairly carried out implied universal suffrage, the absolute supremacy of the popular will, and the abolition of class privileges. And yet it never seems to have occurred to him that he was even indirectly

attacking that complex structure of the British Constitution, rooted in history, marked in every detail by special conditions of growth, and therefore anomalous to the last degree when tried by *à priori* reasoning, of which Burke's philosophical eloquence gives the best explanation and apology. Similarly, Clarke's theology is pure deism, embodied in a series of propositions worked out on the model of a mathematical text-book, and yet in his eyes perfectly consistent with an acceptance of the orthodox dogmas which repose upon traditional authority. This attitude of mind, so intelligible on this side of the Channel, was utterly abhorrent to Rousseau's logical instincts. Englishmen were content to keep their abstract theories for the closet or the lecture-room, and dropped them as soon as they were in the pulpit or in Parliament. Rousseau could give no quarter to any doctrine which could not be fitted into a symmetrical edifice of abstract reasoning. He carried into actual warfare the weapons which his English teachers had kept for purposes of mere scholastic disputation. A monarchy, an order of privileged nobility, a hierarchy claiming supernatural authority, were not logically justifiable on the accepted principles. Never mind, was the English answer, they work very well in practice; let us leave them alone. Down with them

to the ground! was Rousseau's passionate retort. Realise the ideal; force practice into conformity with theory; the voice of the poor and the oppressed is crying aloud for vengeance; the divergence of the actual from the theoretical is no mere trifle to be left to the slow action of time; it means the misery of millions and the corruption of their rulers. The doctrine which had amused philosophers was to become the war-cry of the masses; the men of '89 were at no loss to translate into precepts suited for the immediate wants of the day the doctrines which found their first utterance in the glow of his voluminous eloquence; and the fall of the Bastille showed the first vibrations of the earthquake which is still shaking the soil of Europe.

It is easy, then, to give a logical meaning to Rousseau's return to nature. The whole inanimate world, so ran his philosophy, is perfect, and shows plainly the marks of the Divine workmanship. All evil really comes from man's abuse of freewill. Mountains, and forests, and seas, all objects which have not suffered from his polluting touch, are perfect and admirable. Let us fall down and worship. Man, too, himself, as he came from his Creator's hands, is perfect. His "natural"—that is, original—impulses are all good; and in all men, in all races and regions of the earth, we

find a conscience which unerringly distinguishes good from evil, and a love of his fellows which causes man to obey the dictates of his conscience. And yet the world, as we see it, is a prison or a lazar-house. Disease and starvation make life a burden, and poison the health of the coming generations; those whom fortune has placed above the masses make use of their advantages to harden their hearts, and extract means of selfish enjoyment from the sufferings of their fellow-creatures. What is the source of this heart-rending discord? The abuse of men's freewill; that is, of the mysterious power which enables us to act contrary to the dictates of nature. What is the best name for the disease which it generates? Luxury and corruption — the two cant objects of denunciations which were as popular in the pre-revolutionary generation as attacks upon sensationalism and over-excitement at the present day. And what, then, is the mode of cure? The return to nature. We are to make history run backwards, to raze to its foundations the whole social and intellectual structure that has been erected by generations of corrupt and selfish men. Everything by which the civilised man differs from some theoretical pretension is tainted with a kind of original sin. Political institutions, as they exist, are conveniences for enabling the rich to rob the poor,

and churches contrivances by which priests make ignorance and superstition play into the hands of selfish authority. Level all the existing order, and build up a new one on principles of pure reason; give up all the philosophical and theological dogmas, which have been the work of designing priests and bewildered speculators, and revert to that pure and simple religion which is divinely implanted in the heart of every uncorrupted human being. The Savoyard vicar, if you have any doubts, will tell you what is the true creed; and if you don't believe it, is Rousseau's rather startling corollary, you ought to be put to death.

That final touch shows the arbitrary and despotic spirit characteristic of the relentless theorist. I need not here inquire what relation may be borne by Rousseau's theories to any which could now be accepted by intelligent thinkers. It is enough to say that there would be, to put it gently, some slight difficulty in settling the details of this pure creed common to all unsophisticated minds, and in seeing what would be left when we had destroyed all institutions alloyed by sin and selfishness. The meaning, however, in this connection of his love of nature, taking the words in their mere common-sense, is in harmony with his system. The mountains, whose worship he was the first to

adumbrate, if not actually to institute, were the symbols of the great natural forces free from any stain of human interference. Greed and cruelty had not stained the pure waters of his lovely lake, or dimmed the light to which his vicar points as in the early morning it grazes the edges of the mighty mountain buttresses. Whatever symbolism may be found in the Alps, suggesting emotions of awe, wonder, and softened melancholy, came unstained by the association with the vices of a complex civilisation. If poets and critics have not quite analysed the precise nature of our modern love of mountain scenery, the sentiment may at least be illustrated by a modern parallel. The most eloquent writer who, in our day, has transferred to his pages the charm of Alpine beauties, shares in many ways Rousseau's antipathy for the social order. Mr. Ruskin would explain better than any one why the love of the sublimest scenery should be associated with a profound conviction that all things are out of joint, and that society can only be regenerated by rejecting all the achievements upon which the ordinary optimist plumes himself. After all, it is not surprising that those who are most sick of man as he is should love the regions where man seems smallest. When Swift wished to express his disgust for his race, he showed how absurd our passions appear in a creature six inches

high; and the mountains make us all Liliputians. In other mouths Rousseau's sentiment, more fully interpreted, became unequivocally misanthropical. Byron, if any definite logical theory were to be fixed upon him, excluded the human race at large from his conception of nature. He loved, or talked as though he loved, the wilderness precisely because it was a wilderness; the sea because it sent men "shivering to their gods," and the mountains because their avalanches crush the petty works of human industry. Rousseau was less antisocial than his disciple. The mountains with him were the great barriers which kept civilisation and all its horrors at bay. They were the asylums for liberty and simplicity. There the peasant, unspoilt as yet by *trinkgelds*, not oppressed by the great, nor corrupted by the rich, could lead that idyllic life upon which his fancy delighted. In a passage quoted, as Saint-Beuve notices, by Cowper, Rousseau describes, with his usual warmth of sentiment, the delightful *matinée anglaise* passed in sight of the Alps by the family which had learnt the charms of simplicity, and regulated its manners and the education of its children by the unsophisticated laws of nature. It is doubtless a charming picture, though the virtuous persons concerned are a little over-conscious of their virtue, and it indicates a

point of coincidence between the two men. Rousseau, as Mr. Morley says, could appreciate as well as Cowper the charms of a simple and natural life. Nobody could be more eloquent on the beauty of domesticity; no one could paint better the happiness of family life, where the main occupation was the primitive labour of cultivating the ground, where no breath of unhallowed excitement penetrated from the restless turmoil of the outside world, where the mother knew her place, and kept to her placid round of womanly duties, and where the children were taught with a gentle firmness which developed every germ of reason and affection, without undue stimulus or undue repression. And yet one must doubt whether Cowper would have felt himself quite at ease in the family of the Wolmars. The circle which gathered round the hearth at Olney to listen for the horn of the approaching postman, and solaced itself with cups "that cheer but not inebriate,"[1] would have been a little scandalised by some of the sentiments current in the Vaudois paradise, and certainly by some of the antecedents of the party assembled. Cowper's "Mary," and even their more fashionable friend, Lady Austen, would have felt their respectable

[1] A phrase, by the way, which Cowper, though little given to borrowing, took straight from Berkeley's *Siris*.

prejudices shocked by contact with the new Heloïse; and the views of life taken by their teacher, the converted slaveholder, John Newton, were as opposite as possible to those of Rousseau's imaginary vicar. Indeed, Rousseau's ideal families have that stain of affectation from which Cowper is so conspicuously free. The rose-colour is laid on too thickly. They are too fond of taking credit for universal admiration of the fine feelings which invariably animate their breasts; their charitable sentiments are apt to take the form of very easy condonation of vice; and if they repudiate the world, we cannot believe that they are really unconscious of its existence. Perhaps this dash of self-consciousness was useful in recommending them to the taste of the jaded and weary society, sickening of a strange disease which it could not interpret to itself, and finding for the moment a new excitement in the charms of ancient simplicity. The real thing might have palled upon it. But Rousseau's artificial and self-conscious simplicity expressed that vague yearning and spirit of unrest which could generate a half-sensual sentimentalism, but could be repelled by genuine sentiment. Perhaps it not uncommonly happens that those who are more or less tainted with a morbid tendency can denounce it most effectually. The most

effective satirist is the man who has escaped with labour and pains, and not without some grievous stains, from the slough in which others are still mired. The perfectly pure has sometimes too little sympathy with his weaker brethren to place himself at their point of view. Indeed, as we shall have occasion to remark, Cowper is an instance of a thinker too far apart from the great world to apply the lash effectually.

Rousseau's view of the world and its evils was thus coherent enough, however unsatisfactory in its basis, and was a development of, not a reaction against, the previously dominant philosophy; and, though using a different dialect and confined by different conditions, Cowper's attack upon the existing order harmonises with much of Rousseau's language. The first volume of poems, in which he had not yet discovered the secret of his own strength, is in form a continuation of the satires of the Pope school, and in substance a religious version of Rousseau's denunciations of luxury. Amongst the first symptoms of the growing feeling of uneasy discontent had been the popularity of Brown's now-forgotten "Estimate."

> The inestimable estimate of Brown
> Rose like a paper kite, and charmed the town,

says Cowper; and he proceeds to show that though

Chatham's victorious administration had for a moment restored the self-respect of the country, the evils denounced by Brown were symptoms of a profound and lasting disease. The poems called the "Progress of Error," "Expostulation," "Truth," "Hope," "Charity," and "Conversation," all turn upon the same theme. Though Cowper is for brief spaces playful or simply satirical, he always falls back into his habitual vein of meditation. For the ferocious personalities of Churchill, the coarse-fibred friend of his youth, we have a sad strain of lamentation over the growing luxury and effeminacy of the age. It is a continued anticipation of the lines in the "Task," which seem to express his most serious and sincere conviction.

> The course of human ills, from good to ill,
> From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
> Increase of power begets increase of wealth,
> Wealth luxury, and luxury excess:
> Excess the scrofulous and itchy plague,
> That seizes first the opulent, descends
> To the next rank contagious, and in time
> Taints downwards all the graduated scale
> Of order, from the chariot to the plough.

That is his one unvariable lesson, set in different lights, but associated more or less closely with every observation. The world is ripening or rotting; and, as with Rousseau, luxury is the most significant name

of the absorbing evil. That such a view should commend itself to a mind so clouded with melancholy would not be at any time surprising, but it fell in with a widely spread conviction. Cowper had not, indeed, learnt the most effective mode of touching men's hearts. Separated by a retirement of twenty years from the world, with which he had never been very familiar, and at which he only "peeped through the loopholes of retreat," his satire wanted the brilliance, the quickness of illustration from actual life, which alone makes satire readable. His tone of feeling too frequently suggests that the critic represents the querulous comments of old ladies gossiping about the outside world over their tea-cups, easily scandalised by very simple things. Mrs. Unwin was an excellent old lady, and Newton a most zealous country clergyman. Probably they were intrinsically superior to the fine ladies and gentlemen who laughed at them. But a mind acclimatised to the atmosphere which they breathed inevitably lost its nervous tone. There was true masculine vigour underlying Cowper's jeremiads; but it was natural that many people should only see in him an amiable valetudinarian, not qualified for a censorship of statesmen and men of the world. The man who fights his way through London streets can't stop to

lament over every splash and puddle which might shock poor Cowper's nervous sensibility.

The last poem of the series, however, "Retirement," showed that Cowper had a more characteristic and solacing message to mankind than a mere rehearsal of the threadbare denunciations of luxury. The "Task" revealed his genuine power. There appeared those admirable delineations of country scenery and country thoughts which Sainte-Beuve detaches so lovingly from the mass of serious speculation in which they are embedded. What he, as a purely literary critic, passed over as comparatively uninteresting, gives the exposition of Cowper's intellectual position. The poem is in fact a political moral and religious disquisition interspersed with charming vignettes, which, though not obtrusively moralised, illustrate the general thesis. The poetical connoisseur may separate them from their environment, as a collector of engravings might cut out the illustrations from the now worthless letterpress. The poor author might complain that the most important moral was thus eliminated from his book. But the author is dead, and his opinions don't much matter. To understand Cowper's mind, however, we must take the now obsolete meditation with the permanently attractive pictures. To know why he so tenderly loved the

slow windings of the sinuous Ouse, we must see what he thought of the great Babel beyond. It is the distant murmur of the great city that makes his little refuge so attractive. The general vein of thought which appears in every book of the poem is most characteristically expressed in the fifth, called "A Winter Morning Walk." Cowper strolls out at sunrise in his usual mood of tender playfulness, smiles at the vast shadow cast by the low winter sun, as he sees upon the cottage wall the

> Preposterous sight! the legs without the man.

He remarks, with a passing recollection of his last sermon, that we are all shadows; but turns to note the cattle cowering behind the fences; the labourer carving the haystack; the woodman going to work, followed by his half-bred cur, and cheered by the fragrance of his short pipe. He watches the marauding sparrows, and thinks with tenderness of the fate of less audacious birds; and then pauses to examine the strange fretwork erected at the mill-dam by the capricious freaks of the frost. Art, it suggests to him, is often beaten by Nature; and his fancy goes off to the winter palace of ice erected by the Russian empress. His friend Newton makes use of the same easily allegorised object in one of his religious writings; though I know not

whether the poet or the divine first turned it to account. Cowper, at any rate, is immediately diverted into a meditation on "human grandeur and the courts of kings." The selfishness and folly of the great give him an obvious theme for a dissertation in the true Rousseau style. He tells us how "kings were first invented" —the ordinary theory of the time being that political—, deists added religious—institutions were all somehow "invented" by knaves to impose upon fools. "War is a game," he says, in the familiar phrase,

> Which were their subjects wise
> Kings would not play at.

But, unluckily, their subjects are fools. In England, indeed—for Cowper, by virtue of his family traditions, was in theory a sound Whig—we know how far to trust our kings; and he rises into a warmth on behalf of liberty for which he thinks it right to make a simple-minded apology in a note. The sentiment suggests a vigorous and indeed prophetic denunciation of the terrors of the Bastille, and its "horrid towers and dungeons."

> There's not an English heart that would not leap
> To hear that ye were fallen at last!

Within five or six years English hearts were indeed

welcoming the event thus foretold as the prospects of a new era of liberty. Liberty, says Cowper, is the one thing which makes England dear. Were that boon lost,

> I would at least bewail it under skies
> Milder, amongst a people less austere;
> In scenes which, having never known me free,
> Would not reproach me with the loss I felt.[1]

So far Cowper was but expressing the sentiments of Rousseau, omitting, of course, Rousseau's hearty dislike for England. But liberty suggests to Cowper a different and more solemn vein of thought. There are worse dungeons, he remembers, than the Bastille, and a slavery compared with which that of the victims of French tyranny is a trifle—

> There is yet a liberty unsung
> By poets, and by senators unpraised,
> Which monarchs cannot grant, nor all the power
> Of earth and hell confederate take away.

The patriot is lower than the martyr, though more highly prized by the world; and Cowper changes his

[1] Mr. Tennyson suggests the same consolation in the lines ending—

> Yet waft me from the harbour-mouth,
> Wild winds, I seek a warmer sky;
> And I will see before I die
> The palms and temples of the South.

strain of patriotic fervour into a prolonged devotional comment upon the text,

> He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
> And all are slaves besides.

Who would have thought that we could glide so easily into so solemn a topic from looking at the quaint freaks of morning shadows? But the charm of the "Task" is its sincerity; and in Cowper's mind the most trivial objects really are connected by subtle threads of association with the most solemn thoughts. He begins with mock heroics on the sofa, and ends with a glowing vision of the millennium. No dream of human perfectibility, but the expected advent of the true Ruler of the earth, is the relief to the palpable darkness of the existing world. The "Winter Walk" traces the circle of thought through which his mind invariably revolves.

It would be a waste of labour to draw out in definite formula the systems adopted, from emotional sympathy, rather than from any logical speculation, by Cowper and Rousseau. Each in some degree owed his power—though Rousseau in a far higher degree than Cowper—to his profound sensitiveness to the heavy burden of the time. Each of them felt like a personal grief, and exaggerated in a distempered imagination, the weariness and the forebodings more dimly present to contem-

poraries. In an age when old forms of government had grown rigid and obsolete, when the stiffened crust of society was beginning to heave with new throes, when ancient faiths had left mere husks of dead formulæ to cramp the minds of men, when even superficial observers were startled by vague omens of a coming crash, or expected some melodramatic regeneration of the world, it was perhaps not strange that two men, tottering on the verge of madness, should be amongst the most impressive prophets. The truth of Butler's speculation, that nations, like individuals, might go mad, was about to receive an apparent confirmation. Cowper, like Rousseau, might see the world through the distorting haze of a disordered fancy, but the world at large was strangely disordered, and the smouldering discontent of the inarticulate masses found an echo in their passionate utterances. Their voices were like the moan of a coming earthquake.

The difference, however, so characteristic of the two countries, is reflected by the national representatives. Nobody could be less of a revolutionist than Cowper. His whiggism was little more than a tradition. Though he felt bound to denounce kings, to talk about Hampden and Sidney, and to sympathise with Mrs. Macaulay's old-fashioned republicanism, there was not

a more loyal subject of George III., or one more disposed, when he could turn his mind from his pet hares to the concerns of the empire, to lament the revolt of the American colonies. The awakening of England from the pleasant slumbers of the eighteenth century—for it seems pleasant in these more restless times—took place in a curiously sporadic and heterogeneous fashion. In France the spiritual and temporal were so intricately welded together, the interests of the State were so deeply involved in maintaining the faith of the Church, that conservatism and orthodoxy naturally went together. Philosophers rejected with equal fervour the established religious and the political creed. The new volume of passionate feeling, no longer satisfied with the ancient barriers, poured itself in both cases into the revolutionary channel. In England no such plain and simple issue existed. We had our usual system of compromises in practice, and hybrid combinations of theory. There were infidel conservatives and radical believers. The man who more than any other influenced English history during that century was John Wesley. Wesley was to the full as deeply impressed as Rousseau with the moral and social evils of the time. We may doubt whether Cowper's denunciations of luxury owed most to Rousseau's sentimental eloquence

or to the matter-of-fact vigour of Wesley's "Appeals." Cowper's portrait of Whitefield—"Leuconomus," as he calls him, to evade the sneers of the cultivated—and his frequent references to the despised sect of Methodists, reveal the immediate source of much of his indignation. So far as those evils were caused by the intellectual and moral conditions common to Europe at large, Wesley and Rousseau might be called allies. Both of them gave satisfaction to the need for a free play of unsatisfied emotions. Their solutions of the problem were of course radically different; and Cowper only speaks the familiar language of his sect when he taunts the philosopher with his incapacity to free man from his bondage:

> Spend all the powers
> Of rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise,
> Be most sublimely good, verbosely grand,
> And with poetic trappings grace thy prose
> Till it outmantle all the pride of verse;

where he was possibly, as Sainte-Beuve suggests, thinking of Rousseau, though Shaftesbury was the more frequent butt of such denunciations. The difference in the solution of the great problem of moral regeneration was facilitated by the difference of the environment. Rousseau, though he shows a sentimental tenderness for Christianity, could not be orthodox

without putting himself on the side of the oppressors. Wesley, though feeling profoundly the social discords of the time, could take the side of the poor without the need of breaking in pieces a rigid system of class-privilege. The evil which he had to encounter did not present itself as tyranny oppressing helplessness, but as a general neglect of reciprocal duties verging upon license. On the whole, therefore, he took the conservative side of political questions. When the American war gave the first signal of coming troubles, the combinations of opinion were significant of the general state of mind. Wesley and Johnson denounced the rebels from the orthodox point of view with curious coincidence of language. The only man of equal intellectual calibre who took the same side unequivocally was the arch-infidel Gibbon. The then sleepy Established Church was too tolerant or too indifferent to trouble him: why should he ally himself with Puritans and enthusiasts to attack the Government which at once supported and tied its hands? On the other side, we find such lovers of the established religious order as Burke associated with free-thinkers like Tom Paine and Horne Tooke. Tooke might agree with Voltaire in private, but he could not air his opinions to a party which relied in no small measure on the political zeal

of sound dissenters. Dissent, in fact, meant something like atheism combined with radicalism in France; in England it meant desire for the traditional liberties of Englishmen, combined with an often fanatical theological creed.

Cowper, brought up amidst such surroundings, had no temptation to adopt Rousseau's sweeping revolutionary fervour. His nominal whiggism was not warmed into any subversive tendency. The labourers with whose sorrows he sympathised might be ignorant, coarse, and drunken; he saw their faults too clearly to believe in Rousseau's idyllic conventionalities, and painted the truth as realistically as Crabbe: they required to be kept out of the public-house, not to be liberated from obsolete feudal disqualifications; a poacher, such as he described, was not the victim of a brutal aristocracy, but simply a commonplace variety of thief. And, on the other hand, when he denounced the laziness and selfishness of the Establishment, the luxurious bishops, the sycophantic curates, the sporting and the fiddling and the cardplaying parson, he has no thought of the enmity to Christianity which such satire would have suggested to a French reformer, but is mentally contrasting the sleepiness of the bishops with the virtues of Newton or Whitefield.

> "Where dwell these matchless saints?" old Curio cries.
> "Even at your side, sir, and before your eyes,
> The favour'd few, the enthusiasts you despise."

And, whatever be thought of Cowper's general estimate of the needs of his race, it must be granted that in one respect his philosophy was more consequent than Rousseau's. Rousseau, though a deist in theory, rejected the deist conclusion, that whatever is, is right; and consequently the problem of how it can be that men, who are naturally so good, are in fact so vile, remained a difficulty, only slurred over by his fluent metaphysics about freewill. Cowper's belief in the profound corruption of human nature supplied him with a doctrine less at variance with his view of facts. He has no illusions about the man of nature. The savage, he tells us, was a drunken beast till rescued from his bondage by the zeal of the Moravian missionaries; and the poor are to be envied, not because their lives are actually much better, but because they escape the temptations and sophistries of the rich and learned.

But how should this sentiment fit in with Cowper's love of nature? In the language of his sect, nature is generally opposed to grace. It is applied to a world in which not only the human inhabitants, but the whole creation is tainted with a mysterious evil. Why

should Cowper find relief in contemplating a system in which waste and carnage play so conspicuous a part? Why, when he rescued his pet hares from the general fate of their race, did he not think of the innumerable hares who suffered not only from guns and greyhounds, but from the general annoyances incident to the struggle for existence? Would it not have been more logical if he had placed his happiness altogether in another world, where the struggles and torments of our everyday life are unknown? Indeed, though Cowper, as an orthodox Protestant, held that ascetic practices ministered simply to spiritual conceit, was he not bound to a sufficiently galling form of asceticism? His friends habitually looked askance upon all those pleasures of the intellect and the imagination which are not directly subservient to the religious emotions. They had grave doubts of the expediency of his studies of the pagan Homer. They looked with suspicion upon the slightest indulgence in social amusements. And Cowper fully shared their sentiments. A taste for music, for example, generally suggests to him a parson fiddling when he ought to be praying; and following once more the lead of Newton, he remarks upon the Handel celebration as a piece of grotesque profanity. The name of science calls up to

him a pert geologist, declaring after an examination of the earth

> That He who made it, and revealed its date
> To Moses, was mistaken in its age.

Not only is the great bulk of his poetry directly religious or devotional, but on publishing the "Task" he assures Newton that he has admitted none but Scriptural images, and kept as closely as possible to Scriptural language. Elsewhere he quotes Swift's motto, *Vive la bagatelle*, as a justification of "John Gilpin." Fox is recorded to have said that Swift must have been fundamentally a good-natured man because he wrote so much nonsense. To me the explanation seems to be very different. Nothing is more melancholy than Swift's elaborate triflings, because they represent the efforts of a powerful intellect passing into madness under enforced inaction, to kill time by childish occupation. And the diagnosis of Cowper's case is similar. He trifles, he says, because he is reduced to it by necessity. His most ludicrous verses have been written in his saddest mood. It would be, he adds, "but a shocking vagary" if the sailors on a ship in danger relieved themselves "by fiddling and dancing; yet sometimes much such a part act I." His love of country sights and pleasures is so intense

because it is the most effectual relief. "Oh!" he exclaims, "I could spend whole days and nights in gazing upon a lovely prospect! My eyes drink the rivers as they flow." And he adds, in his characteristic vein of thought, "if every human being upon earth could feel as I have done for many years, there might perhaps be many miserable men among them, but not an unawakened one could be found from the Arctic to the Antarctic circle." The earth and the sun itself are, he says, but "baubles:" but they are the baubles which alone can distract his attention from more awful prospects. His little garden and greenhouse are playthings lent to him for a time, and soon to be left. He "never framed a wish or formed a plan," as he says in the "Task," of which the scene was not laid in the country; and when the gloomiest forebodings unhinged his mind, his love became a passion. He is like his own prisoner in the Bastille playing with spiders. All other avenues of delight are closed to him; he believes, whenever his dark hour of serious thought returns, that he is soon to be carried off to unspeakable torments; all ordinary methods of human pleasure seem to be tainted with some corrupting influence; but whilst playing with his spaniel, or watching his cucumbers, or walking with Mrs. Unwin

in the fields, he can for a moment distract his mind with purely innocent pleasures. The awful background of his visions, never quite absent, though often, we may hope, far removed from actual consciousness, throws out these hours of delight into more prominent relief. The sternest of his monitors, John Newton himself, could hardly grudge this cup of cold water presented, as it were, to the lips of a man in a self-made purgatory.

This is the peculiar turn which gives so characteristic a tone to Cowper's loving portraits of scenery. He is like the Judas seen by St. Brandan on the iceberg; he is enjoying a momentary relaxation between the past of misery and the future of anticipated torment. Such a sentiment must, fortunately, be in some sense exceptional and idiosyncratic. And yet, as we have seen, it fell in with the prevailing current of thought. Cowper agrees with Rousseau in finding that the contemplation of scenery, unpolluted by human passion, and the enjoyment of a calm domestic life is the best anodyne for a spirit wearied with the perpetual disorders of a corrupt social order. He differs from him, as we have seen, in the conviction that a deeper remedy is wanting than any mere political change; in a more profound sense of human wickedness, and, on the other

hand, in a narrower estimate of the conditions of human life. His definition of Nature, to put it logically, would exclude that natural man in whose potential existence Rousseau more or less believed. The passionate love of scenery was enough to distinguish him from the poets of the preceding school, whose supposed hatred of Nature meant simply that they were thoroughly immersed in the pleasures of a society then first developed in its modern form, and not yet undermined by the approach of a new revolution. The men of Pope and Addison's time looked upon country squires as bores incapable of intellectual pleasure, and, therefore, upon country life as a topic for gentle ridicule, or more frequently as an unmitigated nuisance. Probably their estimate was a very sound one. When a true poet like Thomson really enjoyed the fresh air, his taste did not become a passion, and the scenery appeared to him as a pleasant background to his Castle of Indolence. Cowper's peculiar religious views prevented him again from anticipating the wider and more philosophical sentiment of Wordsworth. Like Pope and Wordsworth, indeed, he occasionally uses language which has a pantheistic sound. He expresses his belief that

> There lives and works
> A soul in all things, and that soul is God.

But when Pope uses a similar phrase, it is the expression of a decaying philosophy which never had much vitality, or passed from the sphere of intellectual speculation to affect the imagination and the emotions. It is a dogma which he holds sincerely, it may be, but not firmly enough to colour his habitual sentiments. With Wordsworth, whatever its precise meaning, it is an expression of an habitual and abiding sentiment, which rises naturally to his lips whenever he abandons himself to his spontaneous impulses. With Cowper, as is the case with all Cowper's utterances, it is absolutely sincere for the time; but it is a doctrine not very easily adapted to his habitual creed, and which drops out of his mind whenever he passes from external nature to himself or his fellows. The indwelling divinity whom he recognises in every "freckle, streak, or stain" on his favourite flowers, seems to be hopelessly removed from his own personal interests. An awful and mysterious decree has separated him for ever from the sole source of consolation.

This is not the place to hint at any judgment upon Cowper's theology, or to inquire how far a love of nature, in his sense of the words, can be logically combined with a system based upon the fundamental dogma of the corruption of man. Certainly a similar anticipation of the poetical pantheism of Wordsworth

may be found in that most logical of Calvinists, Jonathan Edwards. Cowper, too, could be at no loss for scriptural precedents, when recognising the immediate voice of God in thunder and earthquakes, or in the calmer voices of the waterbrooks and the meadows. His love of nature, at any rate, is at once of a narrower and sincerer kind than that which Rousseau first made fashionable. He has no tendency to the misanthropic or cynical view which induces men of morbid or affected minds to profess a love of savage scenery simply because it is savage. Neither does he rise to the more philosophical view which sees in the seas and the mountains the most striking symbols of the great forces of the universe to which we must accommodate ourselves, and which might therefore rightfully be associated by a Wordsworth with the deepest emotions of reverential awe. Nature is to him but a collection of "baubles," soon to be taken away, and he seeks in its contemplation a temporary relief from anguish, not a permanent object of worship. He would dread that sentiment as a deistical form of idolatry; and he is equally far from thinking that the natural man, wherever that vague person might be found, could possibly be a desirable object of imitation. His love of nature, in short, keen as it might be, was not the reflection of any philo-

sophical, religious, or political theory. But it was genuine enough to charm many who might regard his theological sentiments as a mere recrudescence of an obsolete form of belief. Mr. Mill tells us how Wordsworth's poetry, little as he sympathised with Wordsworth's opinions, solaced an intellect wearied with premature Greek and over-doses of Benthamism. Such a relief must have come to many readers of Cowper, who would put down his religion as rank fanaticism, and his satire as anile declamation. Men suffered even then—though Cowper was a predecessor of Miss Austen—from existing forms of "life at high pressure." If life was not then so overcrowded, the evils under which men were suffering appeared to be even more hopeless. The great lesson of the value of intervals of calm retreat, of silence and meditation, was already needed, if it is now still more pressing. Cowper said, substantially, Leave the world, as Rousseau said, Upset the world. The reformer, to say nothing of his greater intellectual power, naturally interested the world which he threatened more than the recluse whom it frightened. Limited within a narrower circle of ideas, and living in a society where the great issues of the time were not presented in so naked a form, Cowper's influence ran in a more con-

fined channel. He felt the incapacity of the old order to satisfy the emotional wants of mankind, but was content to revive the old forms of belief instead of seeking a more radical remedy in some subversive or reconstructive system of thought. But the depth and sincerity of feeling which explains his marvellous intensity of pathos, is sometimes a pleasant relief to the sentimentalism of his greater predecessor. Nor is it hard to understand why his passages of sweet and melancholy musing by the quiet Ouse should have come like a breath of fresh air to the jaded generation waiting for the fall of the Bastille—and of other things.

IV.

THE FIRST EDINBURGH REVIEWERS.

WHEN browsing at random in a respectable library, one is pretty sure to hit upon the early numbers of the "Edinburgh Review," and prompted in consequence to ask oneself the question, What are the intrinsic merits of writing which produced so great an effect upon our grandfathers? The "Review," we may say, has lived into a third generation. The last survivor of the original set has passed away; and there are but few relics even of that second galaxy of authors amongst whom Macaulay was the most brilliant star. One may speak, therefore, without shocking existing susceptibilities, of the "Review" in its first period, when Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, and Brougham were the most prominent names. A man may still call himself middle-aged and yet have a distinct memory of Brougham courting, rather too eagerly, the applause of the Social Science Association; or Jeffrey, as he appeared in his kindly old

age, when he could hardly have spoken sharply of a Lake poet; and even of the last outpourings of the irrepressible gaiety of Sydney Smith. But the period of their literary activity is already so distant as to have passed into the domain of history. It is the same thing to say that it already belongs in some degree to the neighbouring or overlapping domain of fiction.

There is, in fact, already a conventional history of the early "Edinburgh Review," repeated without hesitation in all literary histories and assumed in a thousand allusions, which becomes a little incredible when we take down the dusty old volumes, where dingy calf has replaced the original splendours of the blue and yellow, and which have inevitably lost much of their savour during more than half a century's repose. The story of the original publication has been given by the chief founders. Edinburgh, at the beginning of the century, was one of those provincial centres of intellectual activity which have an increasing difficulty in maintaining themselves against metropolitan attractions. In the last half of the eighteenth century, such philosophical activity as existed in the country seemed to have taken refuge in the northern half of the island. A set of brilliant young men, living in a society still proud of the

reputation of Hume, Adam Smith, Reid, Robertson, Dugald Stewart, and other northern luminaries, might naturally be susceptible to the stimulus of literary ambition. In politics the most rampant Conservatism, rendered bitter by the recent experience of the French Revolution, exercised a sway in Scotland more undisputed and vigorous than it is now easy to understand. The younger men who inclined to Liberalism, were naturally prepared to welcome an organ for the expression of their views. Accordingly a knot of clever lads (Smith was 31, Jeffrey 29, Brown 24, Horner 24, and Brougham 23) met in the third (not, as Smith afterwards said, the "eighth or ninth") storey of a house in Edinburgh and started the journal by acclamation. The first number appeared in October 1802, and produced, we are told, an "electrical" effect. Its old humdrum rivals collapsed before it. Its science, its philosophy, its literature were equally admired. Its politics excited the wrath and dread of Tories and the exultant delight of Whigs. It was, says Cockburn, a "pillar of fire," a far-seen beacon, suddenly lighted in a dark place. Its able advocacy of political principles was as striking as its judicial air of criticism, unprecedented in periodical literature. To appreciate its influence, we must remember, says Sydney Smith, that in those days a

number of reforms, now familiar to us all, were still regarded as startling innovations. The Catholics were not emancipated, nor the game-laws softened, nor the Court of Chancery reformed, nor the slave-trade abolished. Cruel punishment still disgraced the criminal code, libel was put down with vindictive severity, prisoners were not allowed counsel in capital cases, and many other grievances now wholly or partially redressed were still flourishing in full force.

Were they put down solely by the "Edinburgh Review"? That, of course, would not be alleged by its most ardent admirers; though Sydney Smith certainly holds that the attacks of the "Edinburgh" were amongst the most efficient causes of the many victories which followed. I am not concerned to dispute the statement; nor in fact do I doubt that it contains much truth. But if we look at the "Review" simply as literary connoisseurs, and examine its volumes expecting to be edified by such critical vigour and such a plentiful outpouring of righteous indignation in burning language as might correspond to this picture of a great organ of liberal opinion, we shall, I fear, be cruelly disappointed. Let us speak the plain truth at once. Every one who turns from the periodical literature of the present day to the original "Edinburgh Review," will be amazed at its

inferiority. It is generally dull, and, when not dull, flimsy. The vigour has departed; the fire is extinct. To some extent, of course, this is inevitable. Even the magnificent eloquence of Burke has lost some of its early gloss. We can read, comparatively unmoved, passages that would have once carried us off our legs in the exuberant torrent of passionate invective. But, making all possible allowance for the fading of all things human, I think that every reader who is frank will admit his disappointment. Here and there, of course, amusing passages illuminated by Sydney Smith's humour or Jeffrey's slashing and swaggering retain a few sparks of fire. The pertness and petulance of the youthful critics is amusing, though hardly in the way intended by themselves. But, as a rule, one may most easily characterise the contents by saying that few of the articles would have a chance of acceptance by the editor of a first-rate periodical to-day; and that the majority belong to an inferior variety of what is now called "padding"—mere perfunctory bits of work, obviously manufactured by the critic out of the book before him.

The great political importance of the "Edinburgh Review" belongs to a later period. When the Whigs began to revive after the long reign of Tory principles,

and such questions as Roman Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform were seriously coming to the front, the "Review" grew to be a most effective organ of the rising party. Even in earlier years, it was doubtless a matter of real moment that the ablest periodical of the day should manifest sympathies with the cause then so profoundly depressed. But in those years there is nothing of that vehement and unsparing advocacy of Whig principles which we might expect from a band of youthful enthusiasts. So far indeed was the "Review" from unhesitating partisanship that the sound Tory Scott contributed to its pages for some years; and so late as the end of 1807 invited Southey, then developing into fiercer Toryism, as became a "renegade" or a "convert," to enlist under Jeffrey. Southey, it is true, was prevented from joining by scruples shared by his correspondent, but it was not for another year that the breach became irreparable. The final offence was given by the "famous article upon Cevallos," which appeared in October 1808. Even at that period Scott understood some remarks of Jeffrey's as an offer to suppress the partisan tendencies of his "Review." Jeffrey repudiated this interpretation; but the statement is enough to show that, for six years after its birth, the "Review" had not been conducted in such a way as to pledge

itself beyond all redemption in the eyes of staunch Tories.[1]

The Cevallos article, the work in uncertain proportions of Brougham and Jeffrey, was undoubtedly calculated to give offence. It contained an eloquent expression of foreboding as to the chances of the war in Spain. The Whigs, whose policy had been opposed to the war, naturally prophesied its ill-success, and, until this period, facts had certainly not confuted their

[1] Scott's letter, stating that this overture had been made by Jeffrey under terror of the "Quarterly," was first published in Lockhart's "Life of Scott." Jeffrey denied that he could ever have made the offer, both because his contributors were too independent and because he had always considered politics to be (as he remembered to have told Scott) the "right leg" of the "Review." Undoubtedly, though Scott's letter was written at the time and Jeffrey's contradiction many years afterwards, it seems that Scott must have exaggerated. And yet in Horner's "Memoirs" we find a letter from Jeffrey which goes far to show that there was more than might be supposed to confirm Scott's statement. Jeffrey begs for Horner's assistance in the "day of need," caused by the Cevallos article and the threatened "Quarterly." He tells Horner that he may write upon any subject he pleases—"only no party politics, and nothing but exemplary moderation and impartiality on all politics. I have allowed too much mischief to be done from my mere indifference and love of sport; but it would be inexcusable to spoil the powerful instrument we have got hold of for the sake of teazing and playing tricks."—Horner's "Memoirs," i. 439. It was on the occasion of the Cevallos article that the Earl of Buchan solemnly kicked the "Review" from his study into the street—a performance which he supposed would be fatal to its circulation.

auguries. It was equally natural that their opponents should be scandalised by their apparent want of patriotism. Scott's indignation was characteristic. The "Edinburgh Review," he says, "tells you coolly, 'We foresee a revolution in this country as well as Mr. Cobbett;' and, to say the truth, by degrading the person of the sovereign, exalting the power of the French armies and the wisdom of their counsels, holding forth that peace (which they allow can only be purchased by the humiliating prostration of our honour) is indispensable to the very existence of this country, I think that for these two years past they have done their utmost to hasten the fulfilment of their own prophecy." Yet, he adds, 9000 copies are printed quarterly, "no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it," and it contains the only valuable literary criticism of the day. The antidote was to be supplied by the foundation of the "Quarterly." The Cevallos article, as Brougham says,[1] "first made the Reviewers conspicuous as Liberals."

Jeffrey and his friends were in fact in the very difficult position of all middle parties during a period

[1] See the privately printed correspondence of Mr. Macvey Napier, a remarkably interesting book, to which I venture to refer, as it has already formed the subject of some public notices.

of intense national and patriotic excitement. If they attacked Perceval or Canning or Castlereagh in one direction, they were equally opposed to the rough-and-ready democracy of Cobbett or Burdett, and to the more philosophical radicalism of men like Godwin or Bentham. They were generally too young to have been infected by the original Whig sympathy for the French Revolution, or embittered by the reaction. They condemned the principles of '89 as decidedly if not as heartily as the Tories. The difference, as Sydney Smith said to his imaginary Tory, Abraham Plymley, is "in the means, not in the end. We both love the Constitution, respect the King, and abhor the French." Only, as the difference about the means was diametrical, Tories naturally held them to be playing into the hands of destructives, though more out of cowardice than malignity. In such a position it is not surprising if the Reviewers generally spoke in apologetic terms and with bated breath. They could protest against the dominant policy as rash and bigoted, but could not put forwards conflicting principles without guarding themselves against the imputation of favouring the common enemy. The Puritans of Radicalism set down this vacillation to a total want of fixed principle, if not to baser motives. The first volume of the "Westminster

Review" (1824) contains a characteristic assault upon the "see-saw" system of the "Edinburgh" by the two Mills. The "Edinburgh" is sternly condemned for its truckling to the aristocracy, its cowardice, political immorality, and (of all things!) its sentimentalism. In after years J. S. Mill contributed to its pages himself; but the opinion of his fervid youth was that of the whole Bentham school.[1] It is plain, however, that the "Review," even when it had succeeded, did not absorb the activities of its contributors so exclusively as is sometimes suggested. They rapidly dispersed to enter upon different careers. Even before the first number appeared, Jeffrey complains that almost all his friends are about to emigrate to London; and the prediction was soon verified. Sydney Smith left to begin his career as a clergyman in London; Horner and Brougham almost immediately took to the English bar, with a view to pushing into public life; Allen joined Lord Holland; Charles Bell set up in a London practice; two other promising contributors took offence, and deserted the "Review" in its infancy; and Jeffrey was left almost alone, though still a centre of attraction to the scattered group. He himself only undertook

[1] See Mill's "Autobiography," p. 92, for an interesting account of these articles.

the editorship, on the understanding that he might renounce it as soon as he could do without it; and always guarded himself most carefully against any appearance of deserting a legal for a literary career. Although the Edinburgh *cénacle* was not dissolved, its bonds were greatly loosened; the chief contributors were in no sense men who looked upon literature as a principal occupation; and Jeffrey, as much as Brougham and Horner, would have resented, as a mischievous imputation, the suggestion that his chief energies were devoted to the "Review." In some sense this might be an advantage. An article upon politics or philosophy is, of course, better done by a professed statesman and thinker than by a literary hack; but, on the other hand, a man who turns aside from politics or philosophy to do mere hackwork, does it worse than the professed man of letters. Work, taken up at odd hours to satisfy editorial importunity or add a few pounds to a narrow income, is apt to show the characteristic defects of all amateur performances. A very large part of the early numbers is amateurish in this objectionable sense. It is mere hand-to-mouth information, and is written, so to speak, with the left hand. A clever man has turned over the last new book of travels or poetry, or made a sudden incursion

into foreign literature or into some passage of history entirely fresh to him, and has given his first impressions with an audacity which almost disarms one by its extraordinary *naïveté*. The standard of such disquisitions was then so low that writing which would now be impossible passed muster without an objection. When, in later years, Macaulay discussed Hampden or Chatham, the book which he ostensibly reviewed was a mere pretext for producing the rich stores of a mind trained by years of previous historical study. Jeffrey wrote about Mrs. Hutchinson's "Memoirs" and Pepys' "Diary" as though the books had for the first time revealed to him the existence of Puritans or of courtiers under the Restoration. The author of an article upon German metaphysics at the present day would think it necessary to show that if he had not the portentous learning which Sir William Hamilton embodied in his "Edinburgh" articles, he had at least read the book under review, and knew something of the language. The author[1] of a contemptuous review of

[1] The author was Brown, certainly a man of great ability, though injured more than most of his fellows by the characteristic weakness of the Scotch metaphysicians. It is not surprising that professors doomed to court the applause of very young men, and avoid the censure of stern Presbyterian parents, should be given to smear over logical gaps with the untempered mortar of fluent rhetoric, and call the process an appeal to common-sense. But the practice is

Kant, in an early number of the "Edinburgh," makes it even ostentatiously evident that he has never read a line of the original, and that his whole knowledge is derived from what (by his own account) is a very rambling and inadequate French essay. The young gentlemen who wrote in those days have a jaunty mode of pronouncing upon all conceivable topics without even affecting to have studied the subject, which is amusing in its way, and which fully explains the flimsy nature of their performance.

The authors, in fact, regarded these essays, at the time, as purely ephemeral. The success of the "Review" suggested republication long afterwards. The first collection of articles was, I presume, Sydney Smith's, in 1839; Jeffrey's and Macaulay's followed in 1843; and at that time even Macaulay thought it necessary to explain that the republication was forced upon him by the Americans. The plan of passing even the most serious books through the pages of a periodical has become so common that such modesty would now imply the emptiest affectation. The collections of Jeffrey and Sydney Smith will give a sufficient

demoralising, and Brown is a grievous offender. The superficiality which it encouraged, as well as the more respectable love of the clear and intelligible, probably prevented him from ever studying Kant at first hand.

impression of the earlier numbers of the "Review." The only contributors of equal reputation were Horner and Brougham. Horner, so far as one can judge, was a typical representative of those solid, indomitable Scotchmen whom one knows not whether to respect for their energy or to dread as the most intolerable of bores. He plodded through legal, metaphysical, scientific, and literary studies like an elephant forcing his way through a jungle; and laboured as resolutely and systematically to acquire graces of style as to master the intricacies of the "dismal science." At an early age, and with no advantages of position, he had gained extraordinary authority in Parliament. Sydney Smith said of him that he had the Ten Commandments written on his face, and looked so virtuous that he might commit any crime with impunity. His death probably deprived us of a most exemplary statesman and first-rate Chancellor of the Exchequer, but it can hardly have been a great loss to literature. Passages from Horner's journals, given in his "Memoirs," are quaint illustrations of the frame of mind generally inculcated in manuals for the use of virtuous young men. At the age of twenty-eight, he resolves one day to meditate upon various topics, distributed under nine heads, including the society to be frequented in the

metropolis; the characters to be studied; the scale of intimacies; the style of conversation; the use of other men's minds in self-education; the regulation of ambition, of political sentiments, connections and conduct; the importance of "steadily systematising all plans and aims of life, and so providing against contingencies as to put happiness at least out of the reach of accident," and the cultivation of moral feelings by "dignified sentiments and pleasing associations" derived from poets, moralists, or actual life. Sydney Smith, in a very lively portrait, says that Horner was the best, kindest, simplest, and most incorruptible of mankind; but intimates sufficiently that his impenetrability to the facetious was something almost unexampled. A jest upon an important subject was, it seems, the only affliction which his strength of principle would not enable him to bear with patience. His contributions gave some solid economical speculation to the "Review," but were neither numerous nor lively. Brougham's amazing vitality wasted itself in a different way. His multifarious energy, from early boyhood to the borders of old age, would be almost incredible, if we had not the good fortune to be contemporaries of Mr. Gladstone. His share in the opening numbers of the "Review" is another of the points upon which

there is an odd conflict of testimony.[1] But from a very early period he was the most voluminous and, at times, the most valuable of contributors. It has been said that he once wrote a whole number, including articles upon lithotomy and Chinese music. It is more authentic that he contributed six articles to one number at the very crisis of his political career, and at the same period he boasts of having written a fifth of the whole "Review" to that time. He would sit down in a morning and write off twenty pages at a single effort. Jeffrey compares his own editorial authority to that of a feudal monarch over some independent barons. When Jeffrey gave up the "Review," this "baron" aspired to something more like domination than independence. He made the unfortunate editor's life a burden to him. He wrote voluminous

[1] It would appear, from one of Jeffrey's statements, that Brougham selfishly hung back till after the third number of the "Review," and its "assured success" (Horner's "Memoirs," i. p. 186, and Macvey Napier's "Correspondence," p. 422); from another, that Brougham, though anxious to contribute, was excluded by Sydney Smith, from prudential motives. On the other hand, Brougham in his autobiography claims (by name) seven articles in the first number, five in the second, eight in the third, and five in the fourth; in five of which he had a collaborator. His hesitation, he says, ended before the appearance of the first number, and was due to doubts as to Jeffrey's possession of sufficient editorial power.

letters, objurgating, entreating, boasting of past services, denouncing rival contributors, declaring that a regard for the views of any other man was base subservience to a renegade Ministry, or foolish attention to the hints of understrappers; threatening, if he was neglected, to set up a rival Review, and generally hectoring, bullying, and declaiming in a manner which gives one the highest opinion of the diplomatic skill of the editor, who managed, without truckling, to avoid a breach with his tremendous contributor. Brougham, indeed, was not quite blind to the fact that the "Review" was as useful to him as he could be to the "Review," and was therefore more amenable than might have been expected, in the last resort. But he was in every relation one of those men who are nearly as much hated and dreaded by their colleagues as by the adversary—a kind of irrepressible rocket, only too easy to discharge, but whose course defied prediction.

It is, however, admitted by every one that the literary results of this portentous activity were essentially ephemeral. His writings are hopelessly commonplace in substance and slipshod in style. His garden offers a bushel of potatoes instead of a single peach. Much of Brougham's work was up to the level necessary to give effect to the manifesto of an active politi-

cian. It was a forcible exposition of the arguments common at the time; but it has nowhere that stamp of originality in thought or brilliance in expression which could confer upon it a permanent vitality.

Jeffrey and Sydney Smith deserve more respectful treatment. Macaulay speaks of his first editor with respectful enthusiasm. He says of the collected contributions that the "variety and fertility of Jeffrey's mind" seem more extraordinary than ever. Scarcely could any three men have produced such "diversified excellence." "When I compare him with Sydney and myself, I feel, with humility perfectly sincere, that his range is immeasurably wider than ours. And this is only as a writer. But he is not only a writer, he has been a great advocate, and he is a great judge. Take him all in all, I think him more nearly an universal genius than any man of our time; certainly far more nearly than Brougham, much as Brougham affects the character." Macaulay hated Brougham, and was, perhaps, a little unjust to him. But what are we to say of the writings upon which this panegyric is pronounced?

Jeffrey's collected articles include about eighty out of two hundred reviews, nearly all contributed to the "Edinburgh" within its first period of twenty-five years.

They fill four volumes, and are distributed under the seven heads—general literature, history, poetry, metaphysics, fiction, politics, and miscellaneous. Certainly there is versatility enough implied in such a list, and we may be sure that he has ample opportunity for displaying whatever may be in him. It is, however, easy to dismiss some of these divisions. Jeffrey knew history as an English gentleman of average cultivation knew it; that is to say, not enough to justify him in writing about it. He knew as much of metaphysics as a clever lad was likely to pick up at Edinburgh during the reign of Dugald Stewart; his essays in that kind, though they show some aptitude and abundant confidence, do not now deserve serious attention. His chief speculative performance was an essay upon Beauty contributed to the "Encyclopædia Britannica," of which his biographer says quaintly that it is "as sound as the subject admits of." It is crude and meagre in substance. The principal conclusion is the rather unsatisfactory one for a professional critic, that there are no particular rules about beauty, and consequently that one taste is about as good as another. Nobody, however, could be less inclined to apply this over-liberal theory to questions of literary taste. There, he evidently holds there is most decidedly a right and

wrong, and everybody is very plainly in the wrong who differs from himself.

Jeffrey's chief fame—or, should we say, notoriety?—was gained, and his merit should be tested by his success in this department. The greatest triumph that a literary critic can win is the early recognition of genius not yet appreciated by his contemporaries. The next test of his merit is his capacity for pronouncing sound judgment upon controversies which are fully before the public; and, finally, no inconsiderable merit must be allowed to any critic who has a vigorous taste of his own—not hopelessly eccentric or silly—and expresses it with true literary force. If not a judge, he may in that case be a useful advocate.

What can we say for Jeffrey upon this understanding? Did he ever encourage a rising genius? The sole approach to such a success is an appreciative notice of Keats, which would be the more satisfactory if poor Keats had not been previously assailed by the Opposition journal. The other judgments are for the most part pronounced upon men already celebrated; and the single phrase which has survived is the celebrated "This will never do," directed against Wordsworth's "Excursion." Every critic has a sacred and inalienable right to blunder at times: but Jeffrey's

blundering is amazingly systematic and comprehensive. In the last of his poetical critiques (October 1829) he sums up his critical experience. He doubts whether Mrs. Hemans, whom he is reviewing at the time, will be immortal. "The tuneful quartos of Southey," he says, "are already little better than lumber; and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley, and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth, and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe, are melting fast from the field of vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry. Even the splendid strains of Moore are fading into distance and dimness, except where they have been married to immortal music; and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride." Who survive this general decay? Not Coleridge, who is not even mentioned; nor is Mrs. Hemans secure. The two who show least marks of decay are—of all people in the world—Rogers and Campbell! It is only to be added that this summary was republished in 1843, by which time the true proportions of the great reputations of the period were becoming more obvious to an ordinary observer. It seems almost incredible now that any sane critic should pick out Rogers and Campbell as the sole enduring relics from the age of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, and Byron.

Doubtless a critic should rather draw the moral of his own fallibility than of his superiority to Jeffrey. Criticism is a still more perishable commodity than poetry. Jeffrey was a man of unusual intelligence and quickness of feeling; and a follower in his steps should think twice before he ventures to cast the first stone. If all critics who have grossly blundered are therefore to be pronounced utterly incompetent, we should, I fear, have to condemn nearly every one who has taken up the profession. Not only Dennis and Rymer, but Dryden, Pope, Addison, Johnson, Gray, Wordsworth, Byron, and even Coleridge, down to the last new critic in the latest and most fashionable journals, would have to be censured. Still there are blunders and blunders; and some of Jeffrey's sins in that kind are such as it is not very easy to forgive. If he attacked great men, it has been said in his defence, he attacked those parts of their writings which were really objectionable. And, of course, nobody will deny that (for example) Wordsworth's wilful and ostentatious inversion of accepted rules presented a very tempting mark to the critic. But—to say nothing of Jeffrey's failure to discharge adequately the correlative duty of generous praise—it must be admitted that his ridicule seems to strike pretty much at random. He picks out Southey, cer-

tainly the least eminent of the so-called school of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Lamb, as the one writer of the set whose poetry deserves serious consideration; and, besides attacking Wordsworth's faults, his occasional flatness and childishness, selects some of his finest poems (*e.g.*, the Ode on the Intimations of Immortality) as flagrant specimens of the hopelessly absurd.

The "White Doe of Rylstone" may not be Wordsworth's best work, but a man who begins a review of it by proclaiming it to be "the very worst poem ever imprinted in a quarto volume," who follows up this remark by unmixed and indiscriminating abuse, and who publishes the review twenty-eight years later as expressing his mature convictions, is certainly proclaiming his own gross incompetence. Or, again, Jeffrey writes about "Wilhelm Meister" (in 1824), knowing its high reputation in Germany, and finds in it nothing but a text for a dissertation upon the amazing eccentricity of national taste which can admire "sheer nonsense," and at length proclaims himself tired of extracting "so much trash." There is a kind of indecency, a wanton disregard of the general consensus of opinion in such treatment of a contemporary classic (then just translated by Mr. Carlyle, and so brought

within Jeffrey's sphere) which one would hope to be now impossible. It is true that Jeffrey relents a little at the end, admits that Goethe has "great talent," and would like to withdraw some of his censure. Whilst, therefore, he regards it as an instance of that diversity of national taste which makes a writer idolised in one country who would not be tolerated in another, he would hold it out rather as an object of wonder than contempt. Though the greater part "would not be endured, and, indeed, could not have been written in England," there are many passages of which any country might naturally be proud. Truly this is an illustration of Jeffrey's fundamental principle, that taste has no laws, and is a matter of accidental caprice.

It may be said that better critics have erred with equal recklessness. De Quincey, who could be an admirable critic where his indolent prejudices were not concerned, is even more dead to the merits of Goethe. Byron's critical remarks are generally worth reading, in spite of his wilful eccentricity; and he spoke of Wordsworth and Southey still more brutally than Jeffrey, and admired Rogers as unreasonably. In such cases we may admit the principle already suggested, that even the most reckless criticism has a kind of value when it implies a genuine (even though

a mistaken) taste. So long as a man says sincerely what he thinks, he tells us something worth knowing.

Unluckily, this is just where Jeffrey is apt to fail; though he affects to be a dictator, he is really a follower of the fashion. He could put up with Rogers' flattest "correctness," Moore's most intolerable tinsel, and even Southey's most ponderous epic poetry, because admiration was respectable. He could endorse, though rather coldly, the general verdict in Scott's favour, only guarding his dignity by some not too judicious criticism; preferring, for example, the sham romantic business of the "Lay" to the incomparable vigour of the rough moss-troopers,

> Who sought the beeves that made their broth
> In Scotland and in England both—

terribly undignified lines, as Jeffrey thinks. So far, though his judicial swagger strikes us now as rather absurd, and we feel that he is passing sentence on bigger men than himself, he does fairly enough. But, unluckily, the "Edinburgh" wanted a butt. All lively critical journals, it would seem, resemble the old-fashioned squires who kept a badger ready to be baited whenever a little amusement was desirable. The rising school of Lake poets, with their austere professions and real weaknesses, was just the game to show a little

sport; and, accordingly, poor Jeffrey blundered into grievous misapprehensions, and has survived chiefly by his worst errors. The simple fact is, that he accepted whatever seemed to a hasty observer to be the safest opinion, that which was current in the most orthodox critical circles, and expressed it with rather more point than his neighbours. But his criticism implies no serious thought or any deeper sentiment than pleasure at having found a good laughing-stock. The most unmistakable bit of genuine expression of his own feelings in Jeffrey's writings is, I think, to be found in his letters to Dickens. "Oh! my dear, dear Dickens!" he exclaims, "what a No. 5" (of *Dombey and Son*) "you have now given us. I have so cried and sobbed over it last night and again this morning, and felt my heart purified by those tears, and blessed and loved you for making me shed them; and I never can bless and love you enough. Since that divine Nelly was found dead on her humble couch, beneath the snow and ivy, there has been nothing like the actual dying of that sweet Paul in the summer sunshine of that lofty room." The emotion is a little senile, and most of us think it misplaced; but at least it is genuine. The earlier thunders of the "Edinburgh Review" have lost their terrors, because they are in fact mere echoes of

commonplace opinion. They are often clever enough, and have all the air of judicial authority, but we feel that they are empty shams, concealing no solid core of strong personal feeling even of the perverse variety. The critic has been asking himself, not "What do I feel?" but "What is the correct remark to make?"

Jeffrey's political writing suggests, I think, in some respects a higher estimate of his merits. He has not, it is true, very strong convictions, but his sentiments are liberal in the better sense of the word, and he has a more philosophical tone than is usual with English publicists. He appreciates the truths, now become commonplace, that the political constitution of the country should be developed so as to give free play for the underlying social forces without breaking abruptly with the old traditions. He combats with dignity the narrow prejudices which led to a policy of rigid repression, and which, in his opinion, could only lead to revolution. But the effect of his principles is not a little marred by a certain timidity both of character and intellect. Hopefulness should be the mark of an ardent reformer, and Jeffrey seems to be always decided by his fears. His favourite topic is the advantage of a strong middle party, for he is terribly afraid of a collision between the two extremes; he can only look

forwards to despotism if the Tories triumph, and a sweeping revolution if they are beaten. Meanwhile, for many years he thinks it most probable that both parties will be swallowed up by the common enemy. Never was there such a determined croaker. In 1808 he suspects that Bonaparte will be in Dublin in about fifteen months, when he, if he survives, will try to go to America. In 1811 he expects Bonaparte to be in Ireland in eighteen months, and asks how England can then be kept, and whether it would be worth keeping? France is certain to conquer the Continent, and our interference will only "exasperate and accelerate." Bonaparte's invasion of Russia in 1813 made him still more gloomy. He rejoiced at the French defeat as one delivered from a great terror, but the return of the Emperor dejects him again. All he can say of the war (just before Waterloo) is that he is "mortally afraid of it," and that he hates Bonaparte "because he makes me more afraid than anybody else." In 1819 he anticipates "tragical scenes" and a sanguinary revolution; in 1821 he thinks as ill as ever "of the state and prospects of the country," though with less alarm of speedy mischief; and in 1822 he looks forward to revolutionary wars all over the Continent, from which we may possibly escape by reason of our "miserable poverty;"

whilst it is probable that our old tyrannies and corruptions will last for some 4000 or 5000 years longer.

A stalwart politician, Whig or Tory, is rarely developed out of a Mr. Much-Afraid or a Mr. Despondency; they are too closely related to Mr. Facing-Both-Ways. Jeffrey thinks it generally a duty to conceal his fears and affect a confidence which he does not feel; but perhaps the best piece of writing in his essays is that in which he for once gives full expression to his pessimist sentiment. It occurs in a review of a book in which Madame de Staël maintains the doctrine of human perfectibility. Jeffrey explains his more despondent view in a really eloquent passage. He thinks that the increase of educated intelligence will not diminish the permanent causes of human misery. War will be as common as ever, wealth will be used with at least equal selfishness, luxury and dissipation will increase, enthusiasm will diminish, intellectual originality will become rarer, the division of labour will make men's lives pettier and more mechanical, and pauperism grow with the development of manufactures. When republishing his essays Jeffrey expresses his continued adherence to these views, and they are more interesting than most of his work, because they have at least the merits of originality and sincerity. Still, one cannot

help observing that if the "Edinburgh Review" was an efficient organ of progress, it was not from any ardent faith in progress entertained by its chief conductor.

It is a relief to turn from Jeffrey to Sydney Smith. The highest epithet applicable to Jeffrey is "clever," to which we may prefix some modest intensitive. He is a brilliant, versatile, and at bottom liberal and kindly man of the world; but he never gets fairly beyond the border-line which irrevocably separates lively talent from original power. There are dozens of writers who could turn out work on the same pattern and about equally good. Smith, on the other hand, stamps all his work with his peculiar characteristics. It is original and unmistakable; and in a certain department —not, of course, a very high one—he has almost unique merits. I do not think that the "Plymley Letters" can be surpassed by anything in the language as specimens of the terse, effective treatment of a great subject in language suitable for popular readers. Of course they have no pretence to the keen polish of Junius, or the weight of thought of Burke, or the rhetorical splendours of Milton; but their humour, freshness, and spirit are inimitable. The "Drapier Letters," to which they have often been compared, were more effective at the moment; but no fair critic

can deny, I think, that Sydney Smith's performance is now incomparably more interesting than Swift's.

The comparison between the Dean and the Canon is an obvious one, and has often been made. There is a likeness in the external history of the two clergymen who both sought for preferment through politics, and were both, even by friends, felt to have sinned against professional proprieties, and were put off with scanty rewards in consequence. Both, too, were masters of a vigorous style, and original humourists. But the likeness does not go very deep. Swift had the most powerful intellect and the strongest passion as undeniably as Smith had the sweetest nature. The admirable good-humour with which Smith accepted his position and devoted himself to honest work in an obscure country parish, is the strongest contrast with Swift's misanthropical seclusion; and nothing can be less like than Smith's admirable domestic history and the mysterious love affairs with Stella and Vanessa. Smith's character reminds us more closely of Fuller, whose peculiar humour is much of the same stamp; and who, falling upon hard times, and therefore tinged by a more melancholy sentiment, yet showed the same unconquerable cheerfulness and intellectual vivacity.

Most of Sydney Smith's "Edinburgh" articles are

of a very slight texture, though the reader is rewarded by an occasional turn of characteristic quaintness. The criticism is of the most simple-minded kind; but here and there crops up a comment which is irresistibly comic. Here, for example, is a quaint passage from a review of Waterton's "Wanderings:"—

> How astonishing are the freaks and fancies of nature! To what purpose, we say, is a bird placed in the woods of Cayenne, with a bill a yard long, making a noise like a puppy-dog, and laying eggs in hollow trees? To be sure, the toucan might retort, To what purpose were gentlemen in Bond Street created? To what purpose were certain members of Parliament created, pestering the House of Commons with their ignorance and folly, and impeding the business of the country? There is no end of such questions. So we will not enter into the metaphysics of the toucan.

Smith's humour is most aptly used to give point to the vigorous logic of a thoroughly healthy nature, contemptuous of all nonsense, full of shrewd common-sense, and righteously indignant in the presence of all injustice and outworn abuse. It would be difficult to find anywhere a more brilliant assault upon the prejudices which defend established grievances than the inimitable "Noodle's Oration," into which Smith has compressed the pith of Bentham's "Book of Fallacies." There is a certain resemblance between the logic of Smith and Macaulay, both of whom, it must be admitted, are rather given to proving commonplaces and

inclined to remain on the surface of things. Smith, like Macaulay, fully understands the advantage of putting the concrete for the abstract, and hammering obvious truths into men's heads by dint of homely explanation. Smith's memory does not supply so vast a store of parallels as that upon which Macaulay could draw so freely; but his humorous illustrations are more amusing and effective. There could not be a happier way of putting the argument for what may be called the lottery system of endowments than the picture of the respectable baker driving past Northumberland House to St. Paul's Churchyard, and speculating on the chance of elevating his "little muffin-faced son" to a place among the Percies or the highest seat in the Cathedral. Macaulay would have enforced his reasoning by a catalogue of successful ecclesiastics. The folly of alienating Catholic sympathies, during our great struggle, by maintaining the old disabilities, is brought out with equal skill by the apologue in the "Plymley Letters" of the orthodox captain of a frigate in a dangerous action, securing twenty or thirty of his crew, who happened to be Papists, under a Protestant guard; reminding his sailors, in a bitter harangue, that they are of different religions; exhorting the Episcopal gunner to distrust the Presbyterian quarter-

master; rushing through blood and brains to examine his men in the Thirty-Nine Articles, and forbidding any one to spunge or ram who has not taken the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. It is quite another question whether Smith really penetrates to the bottom of the question; but the only fault to be found with his statement of the case, as he saw it, is that it makes it rather too clear. The arguments are never all on one side in any political question, and the writer who sees absolutely no difficulty, suggests to a wary reader that he is ignoring something relevant. Still, this is hardly an objection to a popular advocate, and it is fair to add that Smith's logic is not more admirable than the hearty generosity of his sympathy with the oppressed Catholic. The appeal to cowardice is lost in the appeal to true philanthropic sentiment.

With all his merits, there is a less favourable side to Smith's advocacy. When he was condemned as being too worldly and facetious for a priest, it was easy to retort that humour is not of necessity irreligious. It might be added that in his writings it is strictly subservient to solid argument. In a London party he might throw the reins upon the neck of his fancy and go on playing with a ludicrous image till his audience

felt the agony of laughter to be really painful. In his writings he aims almost as straight at his mark as Swift, and is never diverted by the spirit of pure fun. The humour always illuminates well-strung logic. But the scandal was not quite groundless. When he directs his powers against sheer obstruction and antiquated prejudice—against abuses in prisons, or the game-laws or education—we can have no fault to find; nor is it fair to condemn a reviewer because in all these questions he is a follower rather than a leader. It is enough if he knows a good cause when he sees it, and does his best to back up reformers in the press, though hardly a working reformer, and certainly not an originator of reform. But it is less easy to excuse his want of sympathy for the reformers themselves.

If there is one thing which Sydney Smith dreads and dislikes, it is enthusiasm. Nobody would deny, at the present day, that the zeal which supplied the true leverage for some of the greatest social reforms of the time was to be found chiefly amongst the so-called Evangelicals and Methodists. For them, Smith has nothing but the heartiest aversion. He is always having a quiet jest at the religious sentiments of Perceval or Wilberforce, and his most prominent articles in the "Review" were a series of inexcusably bitter attacks upon the

Methodists. He is thoroughly alarmed and disgusted by their progress. He thinks them likely to succeed, and says that, if they succeed, "happiness will be destroyed, reason degraded, and sound religion banished from the world," and that a reign of fanaticism will be succeeded by "a long period of the grossest immorality, atheism, and debauchery." He is not sure that any remedy or considerable palliative is possible, but he suggests, as hopeful, the employment of ridicule, and applies it himself most unsparingly. When the Methodists try to convert the Hindoos, he attacks them furiously for endangering the empire. They naturally reply that a Christian is bound to propagate his belief. The answer, says Smith, is short: "It is not Christianity which is introduced (into India), but the debased nonsense and mummery of the Methodists, which has little more to do with the Christian religion than it has to do with the religion of China." The missionaries, he says, are so foolish, "that the natives almost instinctively duck and pelt them," as, one cannot help remembering, missionaries of an earlier Christian era had been ducked and pelted. He pronounces the enterprise to be hopeless and cruel, and clenches his argument by a statement which sounds strangely enough in the mouth of a sincere Christian :—

Let us ask (he says) if the Bible is universally diffused in Hindostan, what must be the astonishment of the natives to find that we are forbidden to rob, murder, and steal—we who, in fifty years, have extended our empire from a few acres about Madras over the whole peninsula and sixty millions of people, and exemplified in our public conduct every crime of which human nature is capable? What matchless impudence, to follow up such practice with such precepts! If we have common prudence, let us keep the gospel at home, and tell them that Machiavel is our prophet and the god of the Manichæans our god.

We are to make our practice consistent by giving up our virtues instead of our vices. Of course, Smith ends his article by a phrase about "the slow, solid, and temperate introduction of Christianity;" but the Methodists might well feel that the "matchless impudence" was not all on their side, and that this Christian priest, had he lived some centuries earlier, would have sympathised a good deal more with Gallio than with St. Paul.

It is a question which I need not here discuss how far Smith could be justified in his ridicule of men who, with all their undeniable absurdity, were at least zealous believers in the creed which he—as is quite manifest—held in all sincerity. But one remark is obvious; the Edinburgh Reviewers justify, to a certain point, the claim put forward by Sydney Smith; they condemned many crying abuses, and condemned them heartily. They condemned them, as thoroughly sensible men of

the world, animated partly by a really generous sentiment, partly by a tacit scepticism as to the value of the protected interests, and above all by the strong conviction that it was quite essential for the middle party, that is, for the bulk of the respectable well-bred classes, to throw overboard gross abuses which afforded so many points of attack to thorough-going radicals. On the other hand, they were quite indifferent or openly hostile to most of the new forces which stirred men's minds. They patronised political economy because Malthus began by opposing the revolutionary dreams of Godwin and his like. But every one of the great impulses of the time was treated by them in an antagonistic spirit. They savagely ridiculed Coleridge, the great seminal mind of one philosophical school; they fiercely attacked Bentham and James Mill, the great leaders of the antagonist school; they were equally opposed to the Evangelicals who revered Wilberforce, and, in later times, to the religious party, of which Dr. Newman was the great ornament: in poetry they clung, as long as they could, to the safe old principles represented by Crabbe and Rogers: they covered Wordsworth and Coleridge with almost unmixed ridicule, ignored Shelley, and were only tender to Byron and Scott because Scott and Byron were fashionable idols. The truth is, that it

is a mistake to suppose that the eighteenth century ended with the year 1800. It lasted in the upper currents of opinion till at least 1832. Sydney Smith's theology is that of Paley and the common-sense divines of the previous period. Jeffrey's politics were but slightly in advance of the true old Whigs, who still worshipped according to the tradition of their fathers in Holland House. The ideal of the party was to bring the practice of the country up to the theory whose main outlines had been accepted in the Revolution of 1688; and they studiously shut their eyes to any newer intellectual and social movements.

I do not say this by way of simple condemnation; for we have daily more reason to acknowledge the immense value of calm, clear common-sense, which sees the absurd side of even the best impulses. But it is necessary to bear the fact in mind when estimating such claims as those put forward by Sydney Smith. The truth seems to be that the "Edinburgh Review" enormously raised the tone of periodical literature at the time, by opening an arena for perfectly independent discussion. Its great merit, at starting, was that it was no mere publisher's organ, like its rivals, and that it paid contributors well enough to attract the most rising talent of the day. As the "Review" progressed, its capacities

became more generally understood, and its writers, as they rose to eminence and attracted new allies, put more genuine work into articles certain to obtain a wide circulation and to come with great authority. This implies a long step towards the development of the present system, whose merits and defects would deserve a full discussion—the system according to which much of the most solid and original work of the time first appears in periodicals. The tone of periodicals has been enormously raised, but the effect upon general literature may be more questionable. But the "Edinburgh" was not in its early years a journal with a mission, or the organ of an enthusiastic sect. Rather it was the instrument used by a number of very clever young men to put forward the ideas current in the more liberal section of the upper classes, with much occasional vigour and a large infusion of common sense, but also with abundant flippancy and superficiality, and, in a literary sense, without that solidity of workmanship which is essential for enduring vitality.

V.

WORDSWORTH'S ETHICS.

UNDER every poetry, it has been said, there lies a philosophy. Rather, it may almost be said, every poetry is a philosophy. The poet and the philosopher live in the same world and are interested in the same truths. What is the nature of man and the world in which he lives, and what, in consequence, should be our conduct? These are the great problems, the answers to which may take a religious, a poetical, a philosophical, or an artistic form. The difference is that the poet has intuitions, while the philosopher gives demonstrations; that the thought which in one mind is converted into emotion, is in the other resolved into logic; and that a symbolic representation of the idea is substituted for a direct expression. The normal relation is exhibited in the case of the anatomist and the sculptor. The artist intuitively recognises the most perfect form; the man of science analyses the struc-

tural relations by which it is produced. Though the two provinces are concentric, they are not coincident. The reasoner is interested in many details which have no immediate significance for the man of feeling; and the poetic insight, on the other hand, is capable of recognising subtle harmonies and discords of which our crude instruments of weighing and measuring are incapable of revealing the secret. But the connection is so close that greatest works of either kind seem to have a double nature. A philosophy may, like Spinoza's, be apparelled in the most technical and abstruse panoply of logic, and yet the total impression may stimulate a religious sentiment as effectively as any poetic or theosophic mysticism. Or a great imaginative work, like Shakespeare's, may present us with the most vivid concrete symbols, and yet suggest, as forcibly as the formal demonstrations of a metaphysician, the idealist conviction that the visible and tangible world is a dream-woven tissue covering infinite and inscrutable mysteries. In each case the highest intellectual faculty manifests itself in the vigour with which certain profound conceptions of the world and life have been grasped and assimilated. In each case that man is greatest who soars habitually to the highest regions and gazes most steadily upon the widest

horizons of time and space. The logical consistency which frames all dogmas into a consistent whole, is but another aspect of the imaginative power which harmonises the strongest and subtlest emotions excited.

The task, indeed, of deducing the philosophy from the poetry, of inferring what a man thinks from what he feels, may at times perplex the acutest critic. Nor, if it were satisfactorily accomplished, could we infer that the best philosopher is also the best poet. Absolute incapacity for poetical expression may be combined with the highest philosophic power. All that can safely be said is that a man's thoughts, whether embodied in symbols or worked out in syllogisms, are more valuable in proportion as they indicate greater philosophical insight; and therefore that, *ceteris paribus*, that man is the greater poet whose imagination is most transfused with reason; who has the deepest truths to proclaim as well as the strongest feelings to utter.

Some theorists implicitly deny this principle by holding substantially that the poet's function is simply the utterance of a particular mood, and that, if he utters it forcibly and delicately, we have no more to ask. Even so, we should not admit that the thoughts sug-

gested to a wise man by a prospect of death and eternity are of just equal value, if equally well expressed, with the thoughts suggested to a fool by the contemplation of a good dinner. But, in practice, the utterance of emotions can hardly be dissociated from the assertion of principles. Psychologists have shown, ever since the days of Berkeley, that when a man describes (as he thinks) a mere sensation, and says, for example, "I see a house," he is really recording the result of a complex logical process. A great painter and the dullest observer may have the same impressions of coloured blotches upon their retina. The great man infers the true nature of the objects which produce his sensations, and can therefore represent the objects accurately. The other sees only with his eyes, and can therefore represent nothing. There is thus a logic implied even in the simplest observation, and one which can be tested by mathematical rules as distinctly as a proposition in geometry.

When we have to find a language for our emotions instead of our sensations, we generally express the result of an incomparably more complex set of intellectual operations. The poet, in uttering his joy or sadness, often implies, in the very form of his language, a whole philosophy of life or of the universe.

The explanation is given at the end of Shakespeare's familiar passage about the poet's eye :

> Such tricks hath strong imagination,
> That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy ;
> Or in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush supposed a bear !

The *ap*prehension of the passion, as Shakespeare logically says, is a *com*prehension of its cause. The imagination reasons. The bare faculty of sight involves thought and feeling. The symbol which the fancy spontaneously constructs, implies a whole world of truth or error, of superstitious beliefs or sound philosophy. The poetry holds a number of intellectual dogmas in solution ; and it is precisely due to these general dogmas, which are true and important for us as well as for the poet, that his power over our sympathies is due. If his philosophy has no power in it, his emotions lose their hold upon our minds, or interest us only as antiquarians and lovers of the picturesque. But in the briefest poems of a true thinker we read the essence of the life-long reflections of a passionate and intellectual nature. Fears and hopes common to all thoughtful men have been coined into a single phrase. Even in cases where no definite conviction is expressed

or even implied, and the poem is simply, like music, "an indefinite utterance of a certain state of the emotions, we may discover an intellectual element. The rational and the emotional nature have such intricate relations that one cannot exist in great richness and force without justifying an inference as to the other. From a single phrase, as from a single gesture, we can often go far to divining the character of a man's thoughts and feelings. We know more of a man from five minutes' talk than from pages of what is called "psychological analysis." From a passing expression on the face, itself the result of variations so minute as to defy all analysis, we instinctively frame judgments as to a man's temperament and habitual modes of thought and conduct. Indeed, such judgments, if erroneous, determine us only too exclusively in the most important relations of life.

Now the highest poetry is that which expresses the richest, most powerful, and most susceptible emotional nature, and the most versatile, penetrative, and subtle intellect. Such qualities may be stamped upon trifling work. The great artist can express his power within the limits of a coin or a gem. The great poet will reveal his character through a sonnet or a song. Shakespeare, or Milton, or Burns, or Wordsworth can express

their whole mode of feeling within a few lines. An ill-balanced nature reveals itself by a discord, as an illogical mind by a fallacy. A man need not compose an epic on a system of philosophy to write himself down an ass. And, inversely, a great mind and a noble nature may show itself by impalpable but recognisable signs within the "sonnet's scanty plot of ground." Once more, the highest poetry must be that which expresses not only the richest but the healthiest nature. Disease means an absence or a want of balance of certain faculties, and therefore leads to false reasoning or emotional discord. The defect of character betrays itself in some erroneous mode of thought or baseness of sentiment. And since morality means obedience to those rules which are most essential to the spiritual health, vicious feeling indicates some morbid tendency, and is so far destructive of the poetical faculty. An immoral sentiment is the sign either of a false judgment of the world and of human nature, or of a defect in the emotional nature which shows itself by a discord or an indecorum, and leads to a cynicism or indecency which offends the reason through the taste. What is called immorality does not indeed always imply such defects. Sound moral intuitions may be opposed to the narrow code prevalent

at the time; or a protest against puritanical or ascetic perversions of the standard may hurry the poet into attacks upon true principles. And, again, the keen sensibility which makes a man a poet, undoubtedly exposes him to certain types of disease. He is more likely than his thickskinned neighbour to be vexed by evil, and to be drawn into distorted views of life by an excess of sympathy or indignation. Injudicious admirers prize the disease instead of the strength from which it springs; and value the cynicism or the despair instead of the contempt for heartless commonplace or the desire for better things with which it was unfortunately connected. A strong moral sentiment has a great value, even when forced into an unnatural alliance. Nay, even when it is, so to speak, inverted, it often receives a kind of paradoxical value from its efficacy against some opposite form of error. It is only a complete absence of the moral faculty which is irredeemably bad. The poet in whom it does not exist is condemned to the lower sphere, and can only deal with the deepest feelings on penalty of shocking us by indecency or profanity. A man who can revel in "Epicurus' stye" without even the indirect homage to purity of remorse and bitterness, can do nothing but gratify our lowest passions. They, perhaps, have

their place, and the man who is content with such utterances may not be utterly worthless. But to place him on a level with his betters is to confound every sound principle of criticism.

It follows that a kind of collateral test of poetical excellence may be found by extracting the philosophy from the poetry. The test is, of course, inadequate. A good philosopher may be an execrable poet. Even stupidity is happily not inconsistent with sound doctrine, though inconsistent with a firm grasp of ultimate principles. But the vigour with which a man grasps and assimilates a deep moral doctrine is a test of the degree in which he possesses one essential condition of the higher poetical excellence. A continuous illustration of this principle is given in the poetry of Wordsworth, who, indeed, has expounded his ethical and philosophical views so explicitly, one would rather not say so ostentatiously, that great part of the work is done to our hands. Nowhere is it easier to observe the mode in which poetry and philosophy spring from the same root, and owe their excellence to the same intellectual powers. So much has been said by the ablest critics of the purely poetical side of Wordsworth's genius, that I may willingly renounce the difficult task of adding or repeating. I gladly take for granted—

what is generally acknowledged—that Wordsworth in his best moods reaches a greater height than any other modern Englishman. The word "inspiration" is less forced when applied to his loftiest poetry than when used of any of his contemporaries. With defects too obvious to be mentioned, he can yet pierce furthest behind the veil; and embody most efficiently the thoughts and emotions which come to us in our most solemn and reflective moods. Other poetry becomes trifling when we are making our inevitable passages through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Wordsworth's alone retains its power. We love him the more as we grow older and become more deeply impressed with the sadness and seriousness of life; we are apt to grow weary of his rivals when we have finally quitted the regions of youthful enchantment. And I take the explanation to be that he is not merely a melodious writer, or a powerful utterer of deep emotion, but a true philosopher. His poetry wears well because it has solid substance. He is a prophet and a moralist, as well as a mere singer. His ethical system, in particular, is as distinctive and capable of systematic exposition as that of Butler. By endeavouring to state it in plain prose, we shall see how the poetical power implies a sensitiveness to ideas which, when extracted from the

symbolical embodiment, fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought.

There are two opposite types to which all moral systems tend. They correspond to the two great intellectual families to which every man belongs by right of birth. One class of minds is distinguished by its firm grasp of facts, by its reluctance to drop solid substance for the loveliest shadows, and by its preference of concrete truths to the most symmetrical of theories. In ethical questions the tendency of such minds is to consider man as a being impelled by strong but unreasonable passions towards tangible objects. He is a loving, hating, thirsting, hungering—anything but a reasoning—being. As Swift—a typical example of this intellectual temperament—declared, man is not an *animal rationale*, but at most *capax rationis*. At bottom, he is a machine worked by blind instincts. Their tendency cannot be deduced by *à priori* reasoning, though reason may calculate the consequences of indulging them. The passions are equally good, so far as equally pleasurable. Virtue means that course of conduct which secures the maximum of pleasure. Fine theories about abstract rights and correspondence to eternal truths are so many words. They provide decent masks for our passions; they do not really govern them, or alter their nature,

but they cover the ugly brutal selfishness of mankind, and soften the shock of conflicting interests. Such a view has something in it congenial to the English love of reality and contempt for shams. It may be represented by Swift or Mandeville in the last century; in poetry it corresponds to the theory attributed by some critics to Shakespeare; in a tranquil and reasoning mind it leads to the utilitarianism of Bentham; in a proud, passionate, and imaginative mind it manifests itself in such a poem as "Don Juan." Its strength is in its grasp of fact; its weakness, in its tendency to cynicism. Opposed to this is the school which starts from abstract reason. It prefers to dwell in the ideal world, where principles may be contemplated apart from the accidents which render them obscure to vulgar minds. It seeks to deduce the moral code from eternal truths, without seeking for a groundwork in the facts of experience. If facts refuse to conform to theories, it proposes that facts should be summarily abolished. Though the actual human being is, unfortunately, not always reasonable, it holds that pure reason must be in the long run the dominant force, and that it reveals the laws to which mankind will ultimately conform. The revolutionary doctrine of the "rights of man" expressed one form of this doctrine, and showed in the most

striking way a strength and weakness, which are the converse of those exhibited by its antagonist. It was strong as appealing to the loftier motives of justice and sympathy; and weak as defying the appeal to experience. The most striking example in English literature is in Godwin's "Political Justice." The existing social order is to be calmly abolished because founded upon blind prejudice; the constituent atoms called men are to be rearranged in an ideal order as in a mathematical diagram. Shelley gives the translation of this theory into poetry. The "Revolt of Islam" or the "Prometheus Unbound," with all their unearthly beauty, weary the imagination which tries to soar into the thin air of Shelley's dreamworld; just as the intellect, trying to apply the abstract formulæ of political metaphysics to any concrete problem, feels as though it were under an exhausted receiver. In both cases we seem to have got entirely out of the region of real human passions and senses into a world, beautiful perhaps, but certainly impalpable.

The great aim of moral philosophy is to unite the disjoined elements, to end the divorce between reason and experience, and to escape from the alternative of dealing with empty but symmetrical formulæ or concrete and chaotic facts. No hint can be given here as to

the direction in which a final solution must be sought. Whatever the true method, Wordsworth's mode of conceiving the problem shows how powerfully he grasped the questions at issue. If his doctrines are not systematically expounded, they all have a direct bearing upon the real difficulties involved. They are stated so forcibly in his noblest poems that we might almost express a complete theory in his own language. But, without seeking to make a collection of aphorisms from his poetry, we may indicate the cardinal points of his teaching.[1]

The most characteristic of all his doctrines is that which is embodied in the great ode upon the "Intimations of Immortality." The doctrine itself—the theory that the instincts of childhood testify to the pre-existence of the soul—sounds fanciful enough; and Wordsworth took rather unnecessary pains to say that he did not hold it as a serious dogma. We certainly need not ask whether it is reasonable or orthodox to believe that "our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting." The fact symbolised by the poetic fancy—the glory and freshness of our childish instincts—is equally noteworthy, what-

[1] J. S. Mill and Whewell were, for their generation, the ablest exponents of two opposite systems of thought upon such matters. Mill has expressed his obligations to Wordsworth in his Autobiography, and Whewell dedicated to Wordsworth his "Elements of Morality" in acknowledgment of his influence as a moralist.

ever its cause. Some modern reasoners would explain its significance by reference to a very different kind of pre-existence. The instincts, they would say, are valuable, because they register the accumulated and inherited experience of past generations. Wordsworth's delight in wild scenery is regarded by them as due to the "combination of states that were organised in the race during barbarous times, when its pleasurable activities were amongst the mountains, woods, and waters." In childhood we are most completely under the dominion of these inherited impulses. The correlation between the organism and its medium is then most perfect, and hence the peculiar theme of childish communion with nature.

Wordsworth would have repudiated the doctrine with disgust. He would have been "on the side of the angels." No memories of the savage and the monkey, but the reminiscences of the once-glorious soul could explain his emotions. Yet there is this much in common between him and the men of science whom he denounced with too little discrimination. The fact of the value of these primitive instincts is admitted, and admitted for the same purpose. Man, it is agreed, is furnished with sentiments which cannot be explained as the result of his individual experience. They may be

intelligible, according to the evolutionist, when regarded as embodying the past experience of the race; or, according to Wordsworth, as implying a certain mysterious faculty imprinted upon the soul. The scientific doctrine, whether sound or not, has modified the whole mode of approaching ethical problems; and Wordsworth, though with a very different purpose, gives a new emphasis to the facts, upon a recognition of which, according to some theorists, must be based the reconciliation of the great rival schools—the intuitionists and the utilitarians. The parallel may at first sight seem fanciful; and it would be too daring to claim for Wordsworth the discovery of the most remarkable phenomenon which modern psychology must take into account. There is, however, a real connection between the two doctrines, though in one sense they are almost antithetical. Meanwhile we observe that the same sensibility which gives poetical power is necessary to the scientific observer. The magic of the ode, and of many other passages in Wordsworth's poetry, is due to his recognition of this mysterious efficacy of our childish instincts. He gives emphasis to one of the most striking facts of our spiritual experience, which had passed with little notice from professed psychologists. He feels what they afterwards tried to explain.

The full meaning of the doctrine comes out as we study Wordsworth more thoroughly. Other poets—almost all poets—have dwelt fondly upon recollections of childhood. But not feeling so strongly, and therefore not expressing so forcibly, the peculiar character of the emotion, they have not derived the same lessons from their observation. The Epicurean poets are content with Herrick's simple moral—

> Gather ye rosebuds while ye may—

and with his simple explanation—

> That age is best which is the first,
> When youth and blood are warmer.

Others more thoughtful look back upon the early days with the passionate regret of Byron's verses:

> There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
> When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay;
> 'Tis not on youth's smooth cheek the blush alone which fades so fast,
> But the tender bloom of heart is gone, ere youth itself be past.

Such painful longings for the "tender grace of a day that is dead" are spontaneous and natural. Every healthy mind feels the pang in proportion to the strength of its affections. But it is also true that the regret resembles too often the maudlin meditation of a fast young man over his morning's soda-water. It implies, that is, a non-recognition of the higher uses to which the

fading memories may still be put. A different tone breathes in Shelley's pathetic but rather hectic moralisings, and his lamentations over the departure of the "spirit of delight." Nowhere has it found more exquisite expression than in the marvellous "Ode to the West Wind." These magical verses—his best, as it seems to me—describe the reflection of the poet's own mind in the strange stir and commotion of a dying winter's day. They represent, we may say, the fitful melancholy which oppresses a noble spirit when it has recognised the difficulty of forcing facts into conformity with the ideal. He still clings to the hope that his "dead thoughts" may be driven over the universe,

> Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth.

But he bows before the inexorable fate which has cramped his energies:

> A heavy weight of years has chained and bowed
> One too like thee; tameless and swift and proud.

Neither Byron nor Shelley can see any satisfactory solution, and therefore neither can reach a perfect harmony of feeling. The world seems to them to be out of joint, because they have not known how to accept the inevitable, nor to conform to the discipline of facts. And, therefore, however intense the emotion, and how-

ever exquisite its expression, we are left in a state of intellectual and emotional discontent. Such utterances may suit us in youth, when we can afford to play with sorrow. As we grow older we feel a certain emptiness in them. A true man ought not to sit down and weep with an exhausted debauchee. He cannot afford to confess himself beaten with the idealist who has discovered that Rome was not built in a day, nor revolutions made with rose-water. He has to work as long as he has strength; to work in spite of, even by strength of, sorrow, disappointment, wounded vanity, and blunted sensibilities; and therefore he must search for some profounder solution for the dark riddle of life.

This solution it is Wordsworth's chief aim to supply. In the familiar verses which stand as a motto to his poems—

> The child is father to the man,
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety—

the great problem of life, that is, as he conceives it, is to secure a continuity between the period at which we are guided by half-conscious instincts, and that in which a man is able to supply the place of these primitive impulses by reasoned convictions. This is the thought which comes over and over again in his

deepest poems, and round which all his teaching centred. It supplies the great moral, for example, of the "Leech-gatherer:"

> My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
> As if life's business were a summer mood:
> As if all needful things would come unsought
> To genial faith still rich in genial good.

When his faith is tried by harsh experience, the leech-gatherer comes,

> Like a man from some far region sent
> To give me human strength by apt admonishment;

for he shows how the "genial faith" may be converted into permanent strength by resolution and independence. The verses most commonly quoted, such as—

> We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
> But thereof come in the end despondency and sadness,

give the ordinary view of the sickly school. Wordsworth's aim is to supply an answer worthy not only of a poet, but a man. The same sentiment again is expressed in the grand "Ode to Duty," where the

> Stern daughter of the voice of God

is invoked to supply that "genial sense of youth" which has hitherto been a sufficient guidance; or in the

majestic morality of the "Happy Warrior;" or in the noble verses on "Tintern Abbey;" or, finally, in the great ode which gives most completely the whole theory of that process by which our early intuitions are to be transformed into settled principles of feeling and action.

Wordsworth's philosophical theory, in short, depends upon the asserted identity between our childish instincts and our enlightened reason. The doctrine of a state of pre-existence, as it appears in other writers—as, for example, in the Cambridge Platonists [1]—was connected with an obsolete metaphysical system, and the doctrine—exploded in its old form—of innate ideas. Wordsworth does not attribute any such preternatural character to the "blank misgivings" and "shadowy recollections" of which he speaks. They are invaluable data of our spiritual experience; but they do not entitle us to lay down dogmatic propositions independently of experience. They are spontaneous products of a nature in harmony with the universe in which it is placed, and inestimable as a clear indication that such a harmony exists. To interpret and regulate them belongs to the reasoning faculty and the higher imagination of later years. If he does not quite distinguish

[1] The poem of Henry Vaughan, to which reference is often made in this connection, scarcely contains more than a pregnant hint.

between the province of reason and emotion—the most difficult of philosophical problems—he keeps clear of the cruder mysticism, because he does not seek to elicit any definite formulæ from those admittedly vague forebodings which lie on the border-land between the two sides of our nature. With his invariable sanity of mind, he more than once notices the difficulty of distinguishing between that which nature teaches us and the interpretations which we impose upon nature.[1] He carefully refrains from pressing the inference too far.

The teaching, indeed, assumes that view of the universe which is implied in his pantheistic language. 'The Divinity really reveals Himself in the lonely mountains and the starry heavens. By contemplating them we are able to rise into that "blessed mood" in which for a time the burden of the mystery is rolled off our souls, and we can "see into the life of things." And here we must admit that Wordsworth is not entirely free from the weakness which generally besets thinkers of this tendency. Like Shaftesbury in the previous century, who speaks of the universal harmony as emphatically though not as poetically as Wordsworth, he is tempted to adopt a too facile optimism. He seems at times to

[1] As, for example, in the "Lines on Tintern Abbey:" "If this be but a vain belief."

have overlooked that dark side of nature which is recognised in theological doctrines of corruption, or in the scientific theories about the fierce struggle for existence. Can we in fact say that these early instincts prove more than the happy constitution of the individual who feels them? Is there not a teaching of nature very apt to suggest horror and despair rather than a complacent brooding over soothing thoughts? Do not the mountains which Wordsworth loved so well, speak of decay and catastrophe in every line of their slopes? Do they not suggest the helplessness and narrow limitations of man, as forcibly as his possible exaltation? The awe which they strike into our souls has its terrible as well as its amiable side; and in moods of depression the darker aspect becomes more conspicuous than the brighter. Nay, if we admit that we have instincts which are the very substance of all that afterwards becomes ennobling, have we not also instincts which suggest a close alliance with the brutes? If the child amidst his newborn blisses suggests a heavenly origin, does he not also show sensual and cruel instincts which imply at least an admixture of baser elements? If man is responsive to all natural influences, how is he to distinguish between the good and the bad, and, in short, to frame a conscience out of the vague instincts which

contain the germs of all the possible developments of the future?

To say that Wordsworth has not given a complete answer to such difficulties, is to say that he has not explained the origin of evil. It may be admitted, however, that he does to a certain extent show a narrowness of conception. The voice of nature, as he says, resembles an echo; but we "unthinking creatures" listen to "voices of two different natures." We do not always distinguish between the echo of our lower passions and the "echoes from beyond the grave." Wordsworth sometimes fails to recognise the ambiguity of the oracle to which he appeals. The "blessed mood" in which we get rid of the burden of the world, is too easily confused with the mood in which we simply refuse to attend to it. He finds lonely meditation so inspiring that he is too indifferent to the troubles of less self-sufficing or clear-sighted human beings. The ambiguity makes itself felt in the sphere of morality. The ethical doctrine that virtue consists in conformity to nature becomes ambiguous with him, as with all its advocates, when we ask for a precise definition of nature. How are we to know which natural forces make for us and which fight against us?

The doctrine of the love of nature, generally regarded

as Wordsworth's great lesson to mankind, means, as interpreted by himself and others, a love of the wilder and grander objects of natural scenery; a passion for the "sounding cataract," the rock, the mountain, and the forest; a preference, therefore, of the country to the town, and of the simpler to the more complex forms of social life. But what is the true value of this sentiment? The unfortunate Solitary in the "Excursion" is beset by three Wordsworths; for the Wanderer and the Pastor are little more (as Wordsworth indeed intimates) than reflections of himself, seen in different mirrors. The Solitary represents the anti-social lessons to be derived from communion with nature. He has become a misanthrope, and has learnt from "Candide" the lesson that we clearly do not live in the best of all possible worlds. Instead of learning the true lesson from nature by penetrating its deeper meanings, he manages to feed

Pity and scorn and melancholy pride

by accidental and fanciful analogies, and sees in rock pyramids or obelisks a rude mockery of human toils. To confute this sentiment, to upset "Candide,"

This dull product of a scoffer's pen,

is the purpose of the lofty poetry and versified prose of

the long dialogues which ensue. That Wordsworth should call Voltaire dull is a curious example of the proverbial blindness of controversialists; but the moral may be equally good. It is given most pithily in the lines—

> We live by admiration, hope, and love;
> And even as these are well and wisely fused,
> The dignity of being we ascend.

"But what is Error?" continues the preacher; and the Solitary replies by saying, "somewhat haughtily," that love, admiration, and hope are "mad fancy's *favourite* vassals." The distinction between fancy and imagination is, in brief, that fancy deals with the superficial resemblances, and imagination with the deeper truths which underlie them. The purpose, then, of the "Excursion," and of Wordsworth's poetry in general, is to show how the higher faculty reveals a harmony which we overlook when, with the Solitary, we

> Skim along the surfaces of things.

The rightly-prepared mind can recognise the divine harmony which underlies all apparent disorder. The universe is to its perceptions like the shell whose murmur in a child's ear seems to express a mysterious union with the sea. But the mind must be rightly prepared. Everything depends upon the point of view.

One man, as he says in an elaborate figure, looking upon a series of ridges in spring from their northern side, sees a waste of snow, and from the south a continuous expanse of green. That view, we must take it, is the right one which is illuminated by the "ray divine." But we must train our eyes to recognise its splendour; and the final answer to the Solitary is therefore embodied in a series of narratives, showing by example how our spiritual vision may be purified or obscured. Our philosophy must be finally based, not upon abstract speculation and metaphysical arguments, but on the diffused consciousness of the healthy mind. As Butler sees the universe by the light of conscience, Wordsworth sees it through the wider emotions of awe, reverence, and love, produced in a sound nature.

The pantheistic conception, in short, leads to an unsatisfactory optimism in the general view of nature, and to an equal tolerance of all passions as equally "natural." To escape from this difficulty we must establish some more discriminative mode of interpreting nature. Man is the instrument played upon by all impulses, good or bad. The music which results may be harmonious or discordant. When the instrument is in tune, the music will be perfect; but when is it in tune, and how are we to know that it is in tune? That

problem once solved, we can tell which are the authentic utterances and which are the accidental discords. And by solving it, or by saying what is the right constitution of human beings, we shall discover which is the true philosophy of the universe, and what are the dictates of a sound moral sense. Wordsworth implicitly answers the question by explaining, in his favourite phrase, how we are to build up our moral being.

The voice of nature speaks at first in vague emotions, scarcely distinguishable from mere animal buoyancy. The boy, hooting in mimicry of the owls, receives in his heart the voice of mountain torrents and the solemn imagery of rocks, and woods, and stars. The sportive girl is unconsciously moulded into stateliness and grace by the floating clouds, the bending willow, and even by silent sympathy with the motions of the storm. Nobody has ever shown, with such exquisite power as Wordsworth, how much of the charm of natural objects in later life is due to early associations, thus formed in a mind not yet capable of contemplating its own processes. As old Matthew says in the lines which, however familiar, can never be read without emotion—

> My eyes are dim with childish tears,
> My heart is idly stirred;
> For the same sound is in my ears
> Which in those days I heard.

And the strangely beautiful address to the cuckoo might be made into a text for a prolonged commentary by an æsthetic philosopher upon the power of early association. It curiously illustrates, for example, the reason of Wordsworth's delight in recalling sounds. The croak of the distant raven, the bleat of the mountain lamb, the splash of the leaping fish in the lonely tarn, are specially delightful to him, because the hearing is the most spiritual of our senses; and these sounds, like the cuckoo's cry, seem to convert the earth into an "unsubstantial fairy place." The phrase "association" indeed implies a certain arbitrariness in the images suggested, which is not quite in accordance with Wordsworth's feeling. Though the echo depends partly upon the hearer, the mountain voices are specially adapted for certain moods. They have, we may say, a spontaneous affinity for the nobler affections. If some early passage in our childhood is associated with a particular spot, a house or a street will bring back the petty and accidental details; a mountain or a lake will revive the deeper and more permanent elements of feeling. If you have made love in a palace, according to Mr. Disraeli's prescription, the sight of it will recall the splendour of the object's dress or jewellery; if, as Wordsworth would

prefer, with a background of mountains, it will appear in later days as if they had absorbed, and were always ready again to radiate forth, the tender and hallowing influences which then for the first time entered your life. The elementary and deepest passions are most easily associated with the sublime and beautiful in nature.

> The primal duties shine aloft like stars;
> The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,
> Are scattered at the feet of man like flowers.

And, therefore, if you have been happy enough to take delight in these natural and universal objects in the early days, when the most permanent associations are formed, the sight of them in later days will bring back by pre-ordained and divine symbolism whatever was most ennobling in your early feelings. The vulgarising associations will drop off of themselves, and what was pure and lofty will remain.

From this natural law follows another of Wordsworth's favourite precepts. The mountains are not with him a symbol of anti-social feelings. On the contrary, they are in their proper place as the background of the simple domestic affections. He loves his native hills, not in the Byronic fashion, as a savage wilderness, but as the appropriate framework in which a healthy social order can permanently maintain itself.

That, for example, is, as he tells us, the thought which inspired the "Brothers," a poem which excels all modern idylls in weight of meaning and depth of feeling, by virtue of the idea thus embodied. The retired valley of Ennerdale, with its grand background of hills, precipitous enough to be fairly called mountains, forces the two lads into closer affection. Shut in by these "enormous barriers," and undistracted by the ebb and flow of the outside world, the mutual love becomes concentrated. A tie like that of family blood is involuntarily imposed upon the little community of dalesmen. The image of sheep-tracks and shepherds clad in country grey is stamped upon the elder brother's mind, and comes back to him in tropical calms; he hears the tones of his waterfalls in the piping shrouds; and when he returns, recognises every fresh scar made by winter storms on the mountain-sides, and knows by sight every unmarked grave in the little churchyard. The fraternal affection sanctifies the scenery, and the sight of the scenery brings back the affection with overpowering force upon his return. This is everywhere the sentiment inspired in Wordsworth by his beloved hills. It is not so much the love of nature pure and simple, as of nature seen through the deepest human feelings. The light glim-

mering in a lonely cottage, the one rude house in the deep valley, with its "small lot of life-supporting fields and guardian rocks," are necessary to point the moral and to draw to a definite focus the various forces of sentiment. The two veins of feeling are inseparably blended. The peasant-noble, in the "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle," learns equally from men and nature:—

> Love had he found in huts where poor men lie;
> His daily teachers had been woods and hills,
> The silence that is in the starry skies,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

Without the love, the silence and the sleep would have had no spiritual meaning. They are valuable as giving intensity and solemnity to the positive emotion.

The same remark is to be made upon Wordsworth's favourite teaching of the advantages of the contemplative life. He is fond of enforcing the doctrine of the familiar lines, that we can feed our minds "in a wise passiveness," and that

> One impulse from the vernal wood
> Can teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can.

And, according to some commentators, this would seem to express the doctrine that the ultimate end of

life is the cultivation of tender emotions without reference to action. The doctrine, thus absolutely stated, would be immoral and illogical. To recommend contemplation in preference to action is like preferring sleeping to waking; or saying, as a full expression of the truth, that silence is golden and speech silvern. Like that familiar phrase, Wordsworth's teaching is not to be interpreted literally. The essence of such maxims is to be one-sided. They are paradoxical in order to be emphatic. To have seasons of contemplation, of withdrawal from the world and from books, of calm surrendering of ourselves to the influences of nature, is a practice commended in one form or other by all moral teachers. It is a sanitary rule, resting upon obvious principles. The mind which is always occupied in a multiplicity of small observations, or the regulation of practical details, loses the power of seeing general principles and of associating all objects with the central emotions of "admiration, hope, and love." The philosophic mind is that which habitually sees the general in the particular, and finds food for the deepest thought in the simplest objects. It requires, therefore, periods of repose, in which the fragmentary and complex atoms of distracted feeling which make up the incessant whirl of daily life may have time to crystallise

round the central thoughts. But it must feed in order to assimilate; and each process implies the other as its correlative. A constant interest, therefore, in the joys and sorrows of our neighbours is as essential as quiet, self-centred rumination. It is when the eye "has kept watch o'er man's mortality," and by virtue of the tender sympathies of "the human heart by which we live," that to us

> The meanest flower which blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The solitude which implies severance from natural sympathies and affections is poisonous. The happiness of the heart which lives alone,

> Housed in a dream, an outcast from the kind,
> . . . . . .
> Is to be pitied, for 'tis surely blind.

Wordsworth's meditations upon flowers or animal life are impressive, because they have been touched by this constant sympathy. The sermon is always in his mind, and therefore every stone may serve for a text. His contemplation enables him to see the pathetic side of the small pains and pleasures which we are generally in too great a hurry to notice. There are times, of course, when this moralising tendency leads him to the regions of the namby-pamby or sheer prosaic plati-

tude. On the other hand, no one approaches him in the power of touching some rich chord of feeling by help of the pettiest incident. The old man going to the fox-hunt with a tear on his cheek, and saying to himself,

> The key I must take, for my Helen is dead ;

or the mother carrying home her dead sailor's bird; the village schoolmaster, in whom a rift in the clouds revives the memory of his little daughter; the old huntsman unable to cut through the stump of rotten wood—touch our hearts at once and for ever. The secret is given in the rather prosaic apology for not relating a tale about poor Simon Lee:

> O reader ! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring
> O gentle reader ! you would find
> A tale in everything.

The value of silent thought is so to cultivate the primitive emotions that they may flow spontaneously upon every common incident, and that every familiar object becomes symbolic of them. It is a familiar remark that a philosopher or man of science who has devoted himself to meditation upon some principle or law of nature, is always finding new illustrations in the most unexpected quarters. He cannot take up a novel

or walk across the street without hitting upon appropriate instances. Wordsworth would apply the principle to the building up of our "moral being." Admiration, hope, and love should be so constantly in our thoughts, that innumerable sights and sounds which are meaningless to the world, should become to us a language incessantly suggestive of the deepest topics of thought.

This explains his dislike to science, as he understood the word, and his denunciations of the "world." The man of science is one who cuts up nature into fragments, and not only neglects their possible significance for our higher feelings, but refrains on principle from taking it into account. The primrose suggests to him some new device in classification, and he would be worried by the suggestion of any spiritual significance as an annoying distraction. Viewing all objects "in disconnection, dead and spiritless," we are thus really waging

> An impious warfare with the very life
> Of our own souls.

We are putting the letter in place of the spirit, and dealing with nature as a mere grammarian deals with a poem. When we have learnt to associate every object with some lesson

> Of human suffering or of human joy;

when we have thus obtained the "glorious habit,"

> By which sense is made
> Subservient, still to moral purposes,
> Auxiliar to divine;

the "dull eye" of science will light up; for, in observing natural processes, it will carry with it an incessant reference to the spiritual processes to which they are allied. Science, in short, requires to be brought into intimate connection with morality and religion. If we are forced for our immediate purpose to pursue truth for itself, regardless of consequences, we must remember all the more carefully that truth is a whole, and that fragmentary bits of knowledge become valuable as they are incorporated into a general system. The tendency of modern times to specialism brings with it a characteristic danger. It requires to be supplemented by a correlative process of integration. We must study details to increase our knowledge; we must accustom ourselves to look at the detail in the light of the general principles in order to make it fruitful.

The influence of that world which "is too much with us late and soon" is of the same kind. The man of science loves barren facts for their own sake. The man of the world becomes devoted to some

petty pursuit without reference to ultimate ends. He becomes a slave to money, or power, or praise, without caring for their effect upon his moral character. As social organisation becomes more complete, the social unit becomes a mere fragment instead of being a complete whole in himself. Man becomes

> The senseless member of a vast machine,
> Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel.

The division of labour, celebrated with such enthusiasm by Adam Smith,[1] tends to crush all real life out of its victims. The soul of the political economist may rejoice when he sees a human being devoting his whole faculties to the performance of one subsidiary operation in the manufacture of a pin. The poet and the moralist must notice with anxiety the contrast between the old-fashioned peasant who, if he discharged each particular function clumsily, discharged at least many functions, and found exercise for all the intellectual and moral faculties of his nature, and the modern artisan doomed to the incessant repetition of one petty set of muscular expansions and contractions, and whose soul, if he has one, is therefore rather an

[1] See Wordsworth's reference to the "Wealth of Nations," in the "Prelude," book xiii.

encumbrance than otherwise. This is the evil which is constantly before Wordsworth's eyes, as it has certainly not become less prominent since his time. The danger of crushing the individual is a serious one according to his view; not because it implies the neglect of some abstract political rights, but from the impoverishment of character which is implied in the process. Give every man a vote, and abolish all interference with each man's private tastes, and the danger may still be as great as ever. The tendency to "differentiation"—as we call it in modern phraseology—the social pulverisation, the lowering and narrowing of the individual's sphere of action and feeling to the pettiest details, depends upon processes underlying all political changes. It cannot, therefore, be cured by any nostrum of constitution-mongers, or by the negative remedy of removing old barriers. It requires to be met by profounder moral and religious teaching. Men must be taught what is the really valuable part of their natures, and what is the purest happiness to be extracted from life, as well as allowed to gratify fully their own tastes; for who can say that men encouraged by all their surroundings and appeals to the most obvious motives to turn themselves into machines, will not deliberately choose to be machines?

Many powerful thinkers have illustrated Wordsworth's doctrine more elaborately, but nobody has gone more decisively to the root of the matter.

One other side of Wordsworth's teaching is still more significant and original. Our vague instincts are consolidated into reason by meditation, sympathy with our fellows, communion with nature, and a constant devotion to "high endeavours." If life run smoothly, the transformation may be easy, and our primitive optimism turn imperceptibly into general complacency. The trial comes when we make personal acquaintance with sorrow, and our early buoyancy begins to fail. We are tempted to become querulous or to lap ourselves in indifference. Most poets are content to bewail our lot melodiously, and admit that there is no remedy unless a remedy be found in "the luxury of grief." Prosaic people become selfish, though not sentimental. They laugh at their old illusions, and turn to the solid consolations of comfort. Nothing is more melancholy than to study many biographies, and note—not the failure of early promise, which may mean merely an aiming above the mark—but the progressive deterioration of character which so often follows grief and disappointment. If it be not true that most men grow worse as they grow old, it is surely

true that few men pass through the world without being corrupted as much as purified.

Now Wordsworth's favourite lesson is the possibility of turning grief and disappointment into account. He teaches in many forms the necessity of "transmuting" sorrow into strength. One of the great evils is a lack of power

> An agonising sorrow to transmute.

The Happy Warrior is, above all, the man who in face of all human miseries can

> Exercise a power
> Which is our human nature's highest dower;
> Controls them, and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
> Of their bad influence, and their good receives;

who is made more compassionate by familiarity with sorrow, more placable by contest, purer by temptation, and more enduring by distress.[1] It is owing to the constant presence of this thought, to his sensibility to the refining influence of sorrow, that Wordsworth is the only poet who will bear reading in times of dis-

[1] So, too, in the "Prelude":—

> Then was the truth received into my heart,
> That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
> If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
> Honour which could not else have been, a faith,
> An elevation, and a sanctity;
> If new strength be not given, nor old restored,
> The fault is ours, not Nature's.

tress. Other poets mock us by an impossible optimism, or merely reflect the feelings which, however we may play with them in times of cheerfulness, have now become an intolerable burden. Wordsworth suggests the single topic which, so far at least as this world is concerned, can really be called consolatory. None of the ordinary commonplaces will serve, or serve at most as indications of human sympathy. But there is some consolation in the thought that even death may bind the survivors closer, and leave as a legacy enduring motives to noble action. It is easy to say this; but Wordsworth has the merit of feeling the truth in all its force, and expressing it by the most forcible images. In one shape or another the sentiment is embodied in most of his really powerful poetry. It is intended, for example, to be the moral of the "White Doe of Rylstone." There, as Wordsworth says, everything fails so far as its object is external and unsubstantial; everything succeeds so far as it is moral and spiritual. Success grows out of failure; and the mode in which it grows is indicated by the lines which give the key-note of the poem. Emily, the heroine, is to become a soul

> By force of sorrows high
> Uplifted to the purest sky
> Of undisturbed serenity.

The "White Doe" is one of those poems which makes many readers inclined to feel a certain tenderness for Jeffrey's dogged insensibility; and I confess that I am not one of its warm admirers. The sentiment seems to be unduly relaxed throughout; there is a want of sympathy with heroism of the rough and active type, which is, after all, at least as worthy of admiration as the more passive variety of the virtue; and the defect is made more palpable by the position of the chief actors. These rough borderers, who recall William of Deloraine and Dandie Dinmont, are somehow out of their element when preaching the doctrines of quietism and submission to circumstances. But, whatever our judgment of this particular embodiment of Wordsworth's moral philosophy, the inculcation of the same lesson gives force to many of his finest poems. It is enough to mention the "Leech-gatherer," the "Stanzas on Peele Castle," "Michael," and, as expressing the inverse view of the futility of idle grief, "Laodamia," where he has succeeded in combining his morality with more than his ordinary beauty of poetical form. The teaching of all these poems falls in with the doctrine already set forth. All moral teaching, I have sometimes fancied, might be summed up in the one formula, "Waste not." Every element of which our nature is composed may

be said to be good in its proper place; and therefore every vicious habit springs out of the misapplication of forces which might be turned to account by judicious training. The waste of sorrow is one of the most lamentable forms of waste. Sorrow too often tends to produce bitterness or effeminacy of character. But it may, if rightly used, serve only to detach us from the lower motives, and give sanctity to the higher. That is what Wordsworth sees with unequalled clearness, and he therefore sees also the condition of profiting. The mind in which the most valuable elements have been systematically strengthened by meditation, by association of deep thought with the most universal presences, by constant sympathy with the joys and sorrows of its fellows, will be prepared to convert sorrow into a medicine instead of a poison. Sorrow is deteriorating so far as it is selfish. The man who is occupied with his own interests makes grief an excuse for effeminate indulgence in self-pity. He becomes weaker and more fretful. The man who has learnt habitually to think of himself as part of a greater whole, whose conduct has been habitually directed to noble ends, is purified and strengthened by the spiritual convulsion. His disappointment, or his loss of some beloved object, makes him more anxious to fix the bases

of his happiness widely and deeply, and to be content with the consciousness of honest work, instead of looking for what is called success.

But I must not take to preaching in the place of Wordsworth. The whole theory is most nobly summed up in the grand lines already noticed on the character of the Happy Warrior. There Wordsworth has explained in the most forcible and direct language the mode in which a grand character can be formed; how youthful impulses may change into manly purpose; how pain and sorrow may be transmuted into new forces; how the mind may be fixed upon lofty purposes; how the domestic affections—which give the truest happiness—may also be the greatest source of strength to the man who is

> More brave for this, that he has much to love;

and how, finally, he becomes indifferent to all petty ambition—

> Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;
> And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
> His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause.
> This is the Happy Warrior, this is he
> Whom every man in arms should wish to be.

We may now see what ethical theory underlies Wordsworth's teaching of the transformation of instinct into

reason. We must start from the postulate that there is in fact a Divine order in the universe; and that conformity to this order produces beauty as embodied in the external world, and is the condition of virtue as regulating our character. It is by obedience to the "stern lawgiver," Duty, that flowers gain their fragrance, and that "the most ancient heavens" preserve their freshness and strength. But this postulate does not seek for justification in abstract metaphysical reasoning. The "Intimations of Immortality" are precisely intimations, not intellectual intuitions. They are vague and emotional, not distinct and logical. They are a feeling of harmony, not a perception of innate ideas. And, on the other hand, our instincts are not a mere chaotic mass of passions, to be gratified without considering their place and function in a certain definite scheme. They have been implanted by the Divine hand, and the harmony which we feel corresponds to a real order. To justify them we must appeal to experience, but to experience interrogated by a certain definite procedure. Acting upon the assumption that the Divine order exists, we shall come to recognise it, though we could not deduce it by an *à priori* method.

The instrument, in fact, finds itself originally tuned by its Maker, and may preserve its original condition by

careful obedience to the stern teaching of life. The buoyancy common to all youthful and healthy natures then changes into a deeper and more solemn mood. The great primary emotions retain the original impulse, but increase their volume. Grief and disappointment are transmuted into tenderness, sympathy, and endurance. The reason, as it develops, regulates, without weakening, the primitive instincts. All the greatest, and therefore most common, sights of nature are indelibly associated with "admiration, hope, and love;" and all increase of knowledge and power is regarded as a means for furthering the gratification of our nobler emotions. Under the opposite treatment, the character loses its freshness, and we regard the early happiness as an illusion. The old emotions dry up at their source. Grief produces fretfulness, misanthropy, or effeminacy. Power is wasted on petty ends and frivolous excitement, and knowledge becomes barren and pedantic. In this way the postulate justifies itself by producing the noblest type of character. When the "moral being" is thus built up, its instincts become its convictions, we recognise the true voice of nature, and distinguish it from the echo of our own passions. Thus we come to know how the Divine order and the laws by which the character is harmonised are the laws of morality.

To possible objections it might be answered by Wordsworth that this mode of assuming in order to prove is the normal method of philosophy. "You must love him," as he says of the poet,

> Ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love.

The doctrine corresponds to the *crede ut intelligas* of the divine; or to the philosophic theory that we must start from the knowledge already constructed within us by instincts which have not yet learnt to reason. And, finally, if a persistent reasoner should ask why—even admitting the facts—the higher type should be preferred to the lower, Wordsworth may ask, Why is bodily health preferable to disease? If a man likes weak lungs and a bad digestion, reason cannot convince him of his error. The physician has done enough when he has pointed out the sanitary laws obedience to which generates strength, long life, and power of enjoyment. The moralist is in the same position when he has shown how certain habits conduce to the development of a type superior to its rivals in all the faculties which imply permanent peace of mind and power of resisting the shocks of the world without disintegration. Much undoubtedly remains to be said. Wordsworth's teaching, profound and admirable as it may be, has not the potency to

silence the scepticism which has gathered strength since his day, and assailed fundamental—or what to him seemed fundamental—tenets of his system. No one can yet say what transformation may pass upon the thoughts and emotions for which he found utterance in speaking of the Divinity and sanctity of nature. Some people vehemently maintain that the words will be emptied of all meaning if the old theological conceptions to which he was so firmly attached should disappear with the development of new modes of thought. Nature, as regarded by the light of modern science, will be the name of a cruel and wasteful, or at least of a purely neutral and indifferent power, or perhaps as merely an equivalent for the Unknowable, to which the conditions of our intellect prevent us from ever attaching any intelligible predicate. Others would say that in whatever terms we choose to speak of the mysterious darkness which surrounds our little island of comparative light, the emotion generated in a thoughtful mind by the contemplation of the universe will remain unaltered or strengthen with clearer knowledge; and that we shall express ourselves in a new dialect without altering the essence of our thought. The emotions to which Wordsworth has given utterance will remain, though the system in which he believed should sink into oblivion;

as, indeed, all human systems have found different modes of symbolising the same fundamental feelings. But it is enough vaguely to indicate considerations not here to be developed.

It only remains to be added once more that Wordsworth's poetry derives its power from the same source as his philosophy. It speaks to our strongest feelings because his speculation rests upon our deepest thoughts. His singular capacity for investing all objects with a glow derived from early associations; his keen sympathy with natural and simple emotions; his sense of the sanctifying influences which can be extracted from sorrow, are of equal value to his power over our intellects and our imaginations. His psychology, stated systematically, is rational; and, when expressed passionately, turns into poetry. To be sensitive to the most important phenomena is the first step equally towards a poetical or a scientific exposition. To see these truly is the condition of making the poetry harmonious and the philosophy logical. And it is often difficult to say which power is most remarkable in Wordsworth. It would be easy to illustrate the truth by other than moral topics. His sonnet, noticed by De Quincey, in which he speaks of the abstracting power of darkness, and observes that as the hills pass into twilight, we see the same sight as the

ancient Britons, is impressive as it stands, but would be equally good as an illustration in a metaphysical treatise. Again, the sonnet beginning

> With ships the sea was sprinkled far and wide,

is at once, as he has shown in a commentary of his own, an illustration of a curious psychological law—of our tendency, that is, to introduce an arbitrary principle of order into a random collection of objects—and, for the same reason, a striking embodiment of the corresponding mood of feeling. The little poem called "Stepping Westward" is in the same way at once a delicate expression of a specific sentiment and an acute critical analysis of the subtle associations suggested by a single phrase. But such illustrations might be multiplied indefinitely. As he has himself said, there is scarcely one of his poems which does not call attention to some moral sentiment, or to a general principle or law of thought, of our intellectual constitution.

Finally, we might look at the reverse side of the picture, and endeavour to show how the narrow limits of Wordsworth's power are connected with certain moral defects; with the want of quick sympathy which shows itself in his dramatic feebleness, and the austerity of character which caused him to lose his

special gifts too early and become a rather commonplace defender of conservatism; and that curious diffidence (he assures us that it was "diffidence") which induced him to write many thousand lines of blank verse entirely about himself. But the task would be superfluous as well as ungrateful. It was his aim, he tells us, "to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous;" and, high as was the aim, he did much towards its accomplishment.

VI.

LANDOR'S IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS.

When Mr. Forster brought out the collected edition of Landor's works, the critics were generally embarrassed. They evaded for the most part any committal of themselves to an estimate of their author's merits, and were generally content to say that we might now look forward to a definitive judgment in the ultimate court of literary appeal. Such an attitude of suspense was natural enough. Landor is perhaps the most striking instance in modern literature of a radical divergence of opinion between the connoisseurs and the mass of readers. The general public have never been induced to read him, in spite of the lavish applauses of some self-constituted authorities. 'One may go further. It is doubtful whether those who aspire to a finer literary palate than is possessed by the vulgar herd are really so keenly appreciative as the innocent reader of published remarks might suppose. Hypocrisy in matters of taste

—whether of the literal or metaphorical kind—is the commonest of vices. There are vintages, both material and intellectual, which are more frequently praised than heartily enjoyed. I have heard very good judges whisper in private that they have found Landor dull; and the rare citations made from his works often betray a very perfunctory study of them. Not long ago, for example, an able critic quoted a passage from one of the "Imaginary Conversations" to prove that Landor admired Milton's prose, adding the remark that it might probably be taken as an expression of his real sentiments, although put in the mouth of a dramatic person. To any one who has read Landor with ordinary attention, it seems as absurd to speak in this hypothetical manner as it would be to infer from some incidental allusion that Mr. Ruskin admires Turner. Landor's adoration for Milton is one of the most conspicuous of his critical propensities. There are, of course, many eulogies upon Landor of undeniable weight. They are hearty, genuine, and from competent judges. Yet the enthusiasm of such admirable critics as Mr. Emerson and Mr. Lowell may be carped at by some who fancy that every American enjoys a peculiar sense of complacency when rescuing an English genius from the neglect of his own countrymen. If Mr. Browning and

Mr. Swinburne have been conspicuous in their admiration, it might be urged that neither of them has too strong a desire to keep to that beaten highroad of the commonplace, beyond which even the best guides meet with pitfalls. Southey's praises of Landor were sincere and emphatic; but it must be added that they provoke a recollection of one of Johnson's shrewd remarks. "The reciprocal civility of authors," says the Doctor, "is one of the most risible scenes in the farce of life." One forgives poor Southey indeed for the vanity which enabled him to bear up so bravely against anxiety and repeated disappointment; and if both he and Landor found that "reciprocal civility" helped them to bear the disregard of contemporaries, one would not judge them harshly. It was simply a tacit agreement to throw their harmless vanity into a common stock. Of Mr. Forster, Landor's faithful friend and admirer, one can only say that in his writing about Landor, as upon other topics, we are distracted between the respect due to his strong feeling for the excellent in literature, and the undeniable facts that his criticisms have a very blunt edge, and that his eulogies are apt to be indiscriminate.

Southey and Wordsworth had a simple method of explaining the neglect of a great author. According to them, contemporary neglect affords a negative presump-

tion in favour of permanent reputation. No lofty poet has honour in his own generation. Southey's conviction that his ponderous epics would make the fortune of his children is a pleasant instance of self-delusion. But the theory is generally admitted in regard to Wordsworth; and Landor accepted and defended it with characteristic vigour. "I have published," he says in the conversation with Hare, "five volumes of 'Imaginary Conversations:' cut the worst of them through the middle, and there will remain in the decimal fraction enough to satisfy my appetite for fame. I shall dine late; but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select." He recurs frequently to the doctrine. "Be patient!" he says, in another character. "From the higher heavens of poetry it is long before the radiance of the brightest star can reach the world below. We hear that one man finds out one beauty, another man finds out another, placing his observatory and instruments on the poet's grave. The worms must have eaten us before we rightly know what we are. It is only when we are skeletons that we are boxed and ticketed and prized and shown. Be it so! I shall not be tired of waiting." Conscious, as he says in his own person, that in 2000 years there have not been five volumes of prose (the work of one author) equal to his "Con-

versations," he could indeed afford to wait: if conscious of earthly things, he must be waiting still.

This superlative self-esteem strikes one, to say the truth, as part of Landor's abiding boyishness. It is only in schoolboy themes that we are still inclined to talk about the devouring love of fame. Grown-up men look rightly with some contempt upon such aspirations. What work a man does is really done in, or at least through, his own generation; and the posthumous fame which poets affect to value means, for the most part, being known by name to a few antiquarians, schoolmasters, or secluded students. When the poet, to adopt Landor's metaphor, has become a luminous star, his superiority to those which have grown dim by distance is indeed for the first time clearly demonstrated. We can still see him, though other bodies of his system have vanished into the infinite depths of oblivion. But he has also ceased to give appreciable warmth or light to ordinary human beings. He is a splendid name, but not a living influence. There are, of course, exceptions and qualifications to any such statements, but I have a suspicion that even Shakespeare's chief work may have been done in the Globe Theatre, to living audiences, who felt what they never thought of criticising, and were quite unable to measure; and that spite of all

æsthetic philosophers and minute antiquarians and judicious revivals, his real influence upon men's minds has been for the most part declining as his fame has been spreading. To defend or fully expound this heretical dogma would take too much space. The "late-dinner" theory, however, as held by Wordsworth and Landor, is subject to one less questionable qualification. It is an utterly untenable proposition that great men have been generally overlooked in their own day.

If we run over the chief names of our literature, it would be hard to point to one which was not honoured, and sometimes honoured to excess, during its proprietor's lifetime. It is, indeed, true that much ephemeral underwood has often hidden in part the majestic forms which now stand out as sole relics of the forest. It is true also that the petty spite and jealousy of contemporaries, especially of their ablest contemporaries, has often prevented the full recognition of great men. And there have been some whose fame, like that of Bunyan and Defoe, has extended amongst the lower sphere of readers before receiving the ratification of constituted judges. But such irregularities in the distribution of fame do not quite meet the point. I doubt whether one could mention a single case in which

an author, overlooked at the time both by the critics and the mass, has afterwards become famous; and the cases are very rare in which a reputation once decayed has again taken root and shown real vitality. The experiment of resuscitation has been tried of late years with great pertinacity. The forgotten images of our seventeenth-century ancestors have been brought out of the lumber-room amidst immense flourishes of trumpets, but they are terribly worm-eaten; and all efforts to make their statues once more stand firmly on their pedestals have generally failed. Landor himself refused to see the merits of the mere "mushrooms," as he somewhere called them, which grew beneath the Shakespearian oak; and though such men as Chapman, Webster, and Ford have received the warmest eulogies of Lamb and other able successors, their vitality is spasmodic and uncertain. We generally read them, if we read them, at the point of the critic's bayonet.

The case of Wordsworth is no precedent for Landor. Wordsworth's fame was for a long time confined to a narrow sect, and he did all in his power to hinder its spread by wilful disregard of the established canons—even when founded in reason. A reformer who will not court the prejudices even of his friends is likely to be slow in making converts. But it is one thing to be

slow in getting a hearing, and another in attracting men who are quite prepared to hear. Wordsworth resembled a man coming into a drawing-room with muddy boots and a smock-frock. He courted disgust, and such courtship is pretty sure of success. But Landor made his bow in full court-dress. In spite of the difficulty of his poetry, he had all the natural graces which are apt to propitiate cultivated readers. His prose has merits so conspicuous and so dear to the critical mind, that one might have expected his welcome from the connoisseurs to be warm even beyond the limit of sincerity. To praise him was to announce one's own possession of a fine classical taste, and there can be no greater stimulus to critical enthusiasm. One might have guessed that he would be a favourite with all who set up for a discernment superior to that of the vulgar; though the causes which must obstruct a wide recognition of his merits are sufficiently obvious. It may be interesting to consider the cause of his ill-success with some fulness; and it is a comfort to the critic to reflect that in such a case even obtuseness is in some sort a qualification; for it will enable one to sympathise with the vulgar insensibility to the offered delicacy, if only to substitute articulate rejection for simple stolid silence.

I do not wish, indeed, to put forward such a claim

too unreservedly. I will merely take courage to confess that Landor very frequently bores me. So do a good many writers whom I thoroughly admire. If any courage be wanted for such a confession, it is certainly not when writing upon Landor that one should be reticent for want of example. Nobody ever spoke his mind more freely about great reputations. He is, for example, almost the only poet who ever admitted that he could not read Spenser continuously. Even Milton in Landor's hands, in defiance of his known opinions, is made to speak contemptuously of "The Faery Queen." "There is scarcely a poet of the same eminence," says Porson, obviously representing Landor in this case, "whom I have found it so delightful to read in, and so hard to read through." What Landor here says of Spenser, I should venture to say of Landor. There are few books of the kind into which one may dip with so great a certainty of finding much to admire as the "Imaginary Conversations," and few of any high reputation which are so certain to become wearisome after a time. And yet, upon thinking of the whole five volumes so emphatically extolled by their author, one feels the necessity of some apology for this admission of inadequate sympathy. There is a vigour of feeling, an originality of character, a fineness of style

which makes one understand, if not quite agree to, the audacious self-commendation. Part of the effect is due simply to the sheer quantity of good writing. Take any essay separately, and one must admit that—to speak only of his contemporaries—there is a greater charm in passages of equal length by Lamb, De Quincey, or even Hazlitt. None of them gets upon such stilts, or seems so anxious to keep the reader at arm's length. But, on the other hand, there is something imposing in so continuous a flow of stately and generally faultless English, with so many weighty aphorisms rising spontaneously, without splashing or disturbance, to the surface of talk, and such an easy felicity of theme unmarred by the flash and glitter of the modern epigrammatic style.[1] Lamb is both sweeter and more profound, to say nothing of his incomparable humour; but then Lamb's flight is short and uncertain. De Quincey's passages of splendid rhetoric are too often succeeded by dead levels of verbosity and laboured puerilities which make annoyance alternate with enthusiasm. Hazlitt is often spasmodic, and his intrusive egotism is pettish and undignified. But so far

[1] Let me remark in passing that Landor should apparently have credit for one epigram which has been adopted by more popular authors: "Those who have failed as writers turn reviewers," says Porson to Southey.

at least as his style is concerned, Landor's unruffled abundant stream of continuous harmony excites one's admiration the more the longer one reads. Hardly any one who has written so much has kept so uniformly to a high level, and so seldom descended to empty verbosity or to downright slipshod. It is true that the substance does not always correspond to the perfection of the form. There are frequent discontinuities of thought where the style is smoothest. He reminds one at times of those Alpine glaciers where an exquisitely rounded surface of snow conceals yawning crevasses beneath; and if one stops for a moment to think, one is apt to break through the crust with an abrupt and annoying jerk.

The excellence of Landor's style has, of course, been universally acknowledged, and it is natural that it should be more appreciated by his fellow-craftsmen than by general readers less interested in technical questions. The defects are the natural complements of its merits. When accused of being too figurative, he had a ready reply. "Wordsworth," he says in one of his "Conversations," "slithers on the soft mud, and cannot stop himself until he comes down. In his poetry there is as much of prose as there is of poetry in the prose of Milton. But prose on certain occasions

can bear a great deal of poetry; on the other hand, poetry sinks and swoons under a moderate weight of prose, and neither fan nor burnt feather can bring her to herself again." The remark about the relations of prose and poetry was originally made in a real conversation with Wordsworth in defence of Landor's own luxuriance. Wordsworth, it is said, took it to himself, and not without reason, as appears by its insertion in this "Conversation." The retort, however happy, is no more conclusive than other cases of the "tu quoque." We are too often inclined to say to Landor, as Southey says to Porson in another place: "Pray leave these tropes and metaphors." His sense suffers from a superfetation of figures, or from the undue pursuit of a figure, till the "wind of the poor phrase is cracked." In the phrase just quoted, for example, we could dispense with the "fan and burnt feather," which have very little relation to the thought. So, to take an instance of the excessively florid, I may quote the phrase in which Marvell defends his want of respect for the aristocracy of his day. "Ever too hard upon great men, Mr. Marvell!" says Bishop Parker; and Marvell replies:—

> Little men in lofty places, who throw long shadows because our sun is setting; the men so little and the places so lofty that

casting my pebble, I only show where they stand. They would be less contented with themselves, if they had obtained their preferment honestly. Luck and dexterity always give more pleasure than intellect and knowledge; because they fill up what they fall on to the brim at once; and people run to them with acclamations at the splash. Wisdom is reserved and noiseless, contented with hard earnings, and daily letting go some early acquisition to make room for better specimens. But great is the exultation of a worthless man when he receives for the chips and raspings of his Bridewell logwood a richer reward than the best and wisest for extensive tracts of well-cleared truths! Even he who has sold his country——

"Forbear, good Mr. Marvell," says Bishop Parker, and one is inclined to sympathise with the poor man drowned under this cascade of tropes. It is certainly imposing, but I should be glad to know the meaning of the metaphor about "luck and dexterity." Passages occur, again, in which we are tempted to think that Landor is falling into an imitation of an obsolete model. Take, for example, the following:—

A narrow mind cannot be enlarged, nor can a capacious one be contracted. Are we angry with a phial for not being a flask? or do we wonder that the skin of an elephant sits uneasily on a squirrel?

Or this, in reference to Wordsworth:—

Pastiness and flatness are the qualities of a pancake, and thus far he attained his aim: but if he means it for me, let him place the accessories on the table, lest what is insipid and clammy . . . grow into duller accretion and moister viscidity the more I masticate it.

Or a remark given to Newton :—

> Wherever there is vacuity of mind, there must either be flaccidity or craving ; and this vacuity must necessarily be found in the greater part of princes, from the defects of their education, from the fear of offending them in its progress by interrogations and admonitions, from the habit of rendering all things valueless by the facility with which they are obtained, and transitory by the negligence with which they are received and holden.

Should we not remove the names of Porson and Newton from these sentences, and substitute Sam Johnson? The last passage reads very like a quotation from the "Rambler." Johnson was, in my opinion and in Landor's, a great writer in spite of his mannerism; but the mannerism is always rather awkward, and in such places we seem to see—certainly not a squirrel—but, say, a thoroughbred horse invested with the skin of an elephant.

These lapses into the inflated are of course exceptional with Landor. There can be no question of the fineness of his perception in all matters of literary form. To say that his standard of style is classical is to repeat a commonplace too obvious for repetition, except to add a doubt whether he is not often too ostentatious and self-conscious in his classicism. He loves and often exhibits a masculine simplicity, and speaks with enthusiasm of Locke and Swift in their own depart-

ments. Locke is to be "revered;" he is "too simply grand for admiration;" and no one, he thinks, ever had such a power as Swift of saying forcibly and completely whatever he meant to say. But for his own purposes he generally prefers a different model. The qualities which he specially claims seem to be summed up in the conversation upon Bacon's Essays between Newton and Barrow. Cicero and Bacon, says Barrow, have more wisdom between them than all the philosophers of antiquity. Newton's review of the Essays, he adds, "hath brought back to my recollection so much of shrewd judgment, so much of rich imagery, such a profusion of truths so plain as (without his manner of exhibiting them) to appear almost unimportant, that in various high qualities of the human mind I must acknowledge not only Cicero, but every prose writer among the Greeks, to stand far below him. Cicero is least valued for his highest merits, his fulness and his perspicuity. Bad judges (and how few are not so!) desire in composition the concise and obscure; not knowing that the one most frequently arises from paucity of materials, and the other from inability to manage and dispose them." Landor aims, like Bacon, at rich imagery, at giving to thoughts which appear plain more value by fineness of expression, and at

compressing shrewd judgments into weighty aphorisms. He would equally rival Cicero in fulness and perspicuity; whilst a severe rejection of everything slovenly or superfluous would save him from ever deviating into the merely florid. So far as style can be really separated from thought, we may admit unreservedly that he has succeeded in his aim, and has attained a rare harmony of tone and colouring.

There may, indeed, be some doubt as to his perspicuity. Southey said that Landor was obscure, whilst adding that he could not explain the cause of the obscurity. Causes enough may be suggested. Besides his incoherency, his love of figures which sometimes become half detached from the underlying thought, and an over-anxiety to avoid mere smartness which sometimes leads to real vagueness, he expects too much from his readers, or perhaps despises them too much. He will not condescend to explanation if you do not catch his drift at half a word. He is so desirous to round off his transitions gracefully, that he obliterates the necessary indications of the main divisions of the subject. When criticising Milton or Dante, he can hardly keep his hand off the finest passages in his desire to pare away superfluities. Treating himself in the same fashion, he leaves none of those

little signs which, like the typographical hand prefixed to a notice, are extremely convenient, though strictly superfluous. It is doubtless unpleasant to have the hard framework of logical divisions showing too distinctly in an argument, or to have a too elaborate statement of dates and places and external relations in a romance. But such aids to the memory may be removed too freely. The building may be injured in taking away the scaffolding. Faults of this kind, however, will not explain Landor's failure to get a real hold upon a large body of readers. Writers of far greater obscurity and much more repellent blemishes of style to set against much lower merits, have gained a far wider popularity. The want of sympathy between so eminent a literary artist and his time must rest upon some deeper divergence of sentiment. Landor's writings present the same kind of problem as his life. We are told, and we can see for ourselves, that he was a man of many very high, and many very amiable qualities. He was full of chivalrous feeling; capable of the most flowing and delicate courtesy; easily stirred to righteous indignation against every kind of tyranny and bigotry; capable, too, of a tenderness pleasantly contrasted with his outbursts of passing wrath; passionately fond of children, and a true lover of dogs.

But with all this, he could never live long at peace with anybody. He was the most impracticable of men, and every turning-point in his career was decided by some vehement quarrel. He had to leave school in consequence of a quarrel, trifling in itself, but aggravated by "a fierce defiance of all authority and a refusal to ask forgiveness." He got into a preposterous scrape at Oxford, and forced the authorities to rusticate him. This branched out into a quarrel with his father. When he set up as a country gentleman at Llanthony Abbey, he managed to quarrel with his neighbours and his tenants, until the accumulating consequences to his purse forced him to go to Italy. On the road thither he began the first of many quarrels with his wife, which ultimately developed into a chronic quarrel and drove him back to England. From England he was finally dislodged by another quarrel which drove him back to Italy. Intermediate quarrels of minor importance are intercalated between those which provoked decisive crises. The lightheartedness which provoked all these difficulties is not more remarkable than the ease with which he threw them off his mind. Blown hither and thither by his own gusts of passion, he always seems to fall on his feet, and forgets his trouble as a schoolboy forgets yesterday's flogging. On

the first transitory separation from his wife, he made himself quite happy by writing Latin verses; and he always seems to have found sufficient consolation in such literary occupation for vexations which would have driven some people out of their mind. He would not, he writes, encounter the rudeness of a certain lawyer to save all his property; but he adds, "I have chastised him in my Latin poetry now in the press." Such a mode of chastisement seems to have been as completely satisfactory to Landor as it doubtless was to the lawyer.

His quarrels do not alienate us, for it is evident that they did not proceed from any malignant passion. If his temper was ungovernable, his passions were not odious, or, in any low sense, selfish. In many, if not all of his quarrels he seems to have had at least a very strong show of right on his side, and to have put himself in the wrong by an excessive insistence upon his own dignity. He was one of those ingenious people who always contrive to be punctilious in the wrong place. It is amusing to observe how Scott generally bestows upon his heroes so keen a sense of honour that he can hardly save them from running their heads against stone walls; whilst to their followers he gives an abundance of shrewd sense which

fully appreciates Falstaff's theory of honour. Scott himself managed to combine the two qualities; but poor Landor seems to have had Hotspur's readiness to quarrel on the tenth part of a hair without the redeeming touch of common-sense. In a slightly different social sphere, he must, one would fancy, have been the mark of a dozen bullets before he had grown up to manhood: it is not quite clear how, even as it was, he avoided duels, unless because he regarded the practice as a Christian barbarism to which the ancients had never condescended.

His position and surroundings tended to aggravate his incoherencies of statement. Like his own Peterborough, he was a man of aristocratic feeling, with a hearty contempt for aristocrats. The expectation that he would one day join the ranks of the country gentlemen unsettled him as a scholar; and when he became a landed proprietor he despised his fellow "barbarians" with a true scholar's contempt. He was not forced into the ordinary professional groove, and yet did not fully imbibe the prejudices of the class who can afford to be idle, and the natural result is an odd mixture of conflicting prejudices. He is classical in taste and cosmopolitan in life, and yet he always retains a certain John-Bull element. His preference of Shakespeare

to Racine is associated with, if not partly prompted by, a mere English antipathy to foreigners. He never becomes Italianised so far as to lose his contempt for men whose ideas of sport rank larks with the orthodox partridge. He abuses Castlereagh and poor George III. to his heart's content, and so far flies in the face of British prejudice; but it is by no means as a sympathiser with foreign innovations. His republicanism is strongly dashed with old-fashioned conservatism, and he is proud of a doubtful descent from old worthies of the true English type. Through all his would-be paganism we feel that at bottom he is after all a true-born and wrong-headed Englishman. He never, like Shelley, pushed his quarrel with the old order to the extreme, but remained in a solitary cave of Adullam. "There can be no great genius," says Penn to Peterborough, "where there is not profound and continued reasoning." The remark is too good for Penn; and yet it would be dangerous in Landor's own mouth; for certainly the defect which most strikes us, both in his life and his writings, is just the inconsistency which leaves most people as the reasoning powers develop. His work was marred by the unreasonableness of a nature so impetuous and so absorbed by any momentary gust of passion that he could never bring his thoughts or his plans to

a focus, or conform them to a general scheme. His prejudices master him both in speculation and practice. He cannot fairly rise above them, or govern them by reference to general principles or the permanent interests of his life. In the vulgar phrase, he is always ready to cut off his nose to spite his face. He quarrels with his schoolmaster or his wife. In an instant he is all fire and fury, runs amuck at his best friends, and does irreparable mischief. Some men might try to atone for such offences by remorse. Landor, unluckily for himself, could forget the past as easily as he could ignore the future. He lives only in the present, and can throw himself into a favourite author or compose Latin verses or an imaginary conversation as though schoolmasters or wives, or duns or critics, had no existence. With such a temperament, reasoning, which implies patient contemplation and painful liberation from prejudice, has no fair chance; his principles are not the growth of thought, but the translation into dogmas of intense likes and dislikes, which have grown up in his mind he scarcely knows how, and gathered strength by sheer force of repetition instead of deliberate examination.

His writings reflect — and in some ways only too faithfully—these idiosyncrasies. Southey said that his temper was the only explanation of his faults. "Never

did man represent himself in his writings so much less generous, less just, less compassionate, less noble in all respects than he really is. I certainly," he adds, "never knew any one of brighter genius or of kinder heart." Southey, no doubt, was in this case resenting certain attacks of Landor's upon his most cherished opinions; and, truly, nothing but continuous separation could have preserved the friendship between two men so peremptorily opposed upon so many essential points. Southey's criticism, though sharpened by such latent antagonisms, has really much force. The "Conversations" give much that Landor's friends would have been glad to ignore; and yet they present such a full-length portrait of the man, that it is better to dwell upon them than upon his poetry, which, moreover, with all its fine qualities, is (I cannot help thinking) of less intrinsic value. The ordinary reader, however, is repelled from the "Conversations" not only by mere inherent difficulties, but by comments which raise a false expectation. An easy-going critic is apt to assume of any book that it exactly fulfils the ostensible aim of the author. So we are told of "Shakespeare's Examination" (and on the high authority of Charles Lamb), that no one could have written it except Landor or Shakespeare himself. When Bacon is introduced, we

are assured that the aphorisms introduced are worthy of Bacon himself. What Cicero is made to say is exactly what he would have said, "if he could;" and the dialogue between Walton, Cotton, and Oldways is, of course, as good as a passage from the "Complete Angler." In the same spirit we are told that the dialogues were to be "one-act dramas;" and we are informed how the great philosophers, statesmen, poets, and artists of all ages did in fact pass across the stage, each represented to the life, and each discoursing in his most admirable style.

All this is easy to say, but unluckily represents what the "Conversations" would have been had they been perfect. To say that they are very far from perfect is only to say that they were the compositions of a man; but Landor was also a man to whom his best friends would hardly attribute a remarkable immunity from fault. The dialogue, it need hardly be remarked, is one of the most difficult of all forms of composition. One rule, however, would be generally admitted. Landor defends his digressions on the ground that they always occur in real conversations. If we "adhere to one point," he says (in Southey's person), "it is a disquisition, not a conversation." And he adds, with one of his wilful back-handed blows at

Plato, that most writers of dialogue plunge into abstruse questions, and "collect a heap of arguments to be blown away by the bloated whiff of some rhetorical charlatan tricked out in a multiplicity of ribbons for the occasion." Possibly! but for all that, the perfect dialogue ought not, we should say, to be really incoherent. It should include digressions, but the digressions ought to return upon the main subject. The art consists in preserving real unity in the midst of the superficial deviations rendered easy by this form of composition. The facility of digression is really a temptation, not a privilege. Anybody can write blank verse of a kind, because it so easily slips into prose; and that is why good blank verse is so rare. And so anybody can write a decent dialogue if you allow him to ramble as much as we all do in actual talk. The finest philosophical dialogues are those in which a complete logical framework underlies the dramatic structure. They are a perfect fusion of logic and imagination. Instead of harsh divisions and cross-divisions of the subject, and a balance of abstract arguments, we have vivid portraits of human beings, each embodying a different line of thought. But the logic is still seen, though the more carefully hidden the more exquisite the skill of the artist. And the purely artistic dialogue which

describes passion or the emotions arising from a given situation should in the same way set forth a single idea, and preserve a dramatic unity of conception at least as rigidly as a full-grown play. So far as Landor used his facilities as an excuse for rambling, instead of so skilfully subordinating them to the main purpose as to reproduce new variations on the central theme, he is clearly in error, or is at least aiming at a lower kind of excellence. And this, it may be said at once, seems to be the most radical defect in point of composition of Landor's "Conversations." They have the fault which his real talk is said to have exemplified. We are told that his temperament "disqualified him for anything like sustained reasoning, and he instinctively backed away from discussion or argument." Many of the written dialogues are a prolonged series of explosions; when one expects a continuous development of a theme, they are monotonous thunder-growls. Landor undoubtedly had a sufficient share of dramatic power to write short dialogues expressing a single situation with most admirable power, delicacy, and firmness of touch. Nor, again, does the criticism just made refer to those longer dialogues which are in reality a mere string of notes upon poems or proposals for reforms in spelling. The slight dramatic form

binds together his pencillings from the margins of "Paradise Lost" or Wordsworth's poems very pleasantly, and enables him to give additional effect to vivacious outbursts of praise or censure. But the more elaborate dialogues suffer grievously from this absence of a true unity. There is not that skilful evolution of a central idea without the rigid formality of scientific discussion which we admire in the real masterpieces of the art. We have a conglomerate, not an organic growth; a series of observations set forth with never-failing elegance of style, and often with singular keenness of perception; but they do not take us beyond the starting-point. When Robinson Crusoe crossed the Pyrenees, his guide led him by such dexterous windings and gradual ascents that he found himself across the mountains before he knew where he was. With Landor it is just the opposite. After many digressions and ramblings we find ourselves back on the same side of the original question. We are marking time with admirable gracefulness, but somehow we are not advancing. Naturally flesh and blood grow weary when there is no apparent end to a discussion, except that the author must in time be wearied of performing variations upon a single theme.

We are more easily reconciled to some other faults

which are rather due to expectations raised by his critics than to positive errors. No one, for example, would care to notice an anachronism, if Landor did not occasionally put in a claim for accuracy. I have no objection whatever to allow Hooker to console Bacon for his loss of the chancellorship, in calm disregard of the fact that Hooker died some twenty years before Bacon rose to that high office. The fault can be amended by substituting any other name for Hooker's. Nor do I at all wish to find in Landor that kind of archæological accuracy which is sought by some composers of historical romances. Were it not that critics have asserted the opposite, it would be hardly worth while to say that Landor's style seldom condescends to adapt itself to the mouth of the speaker, and that from Demosthenes to Porson every interlocutor has palpably the true Landorian trick of speech. Here and there, it is true, the effect is rather unpleasant. Pericles and Aspasia are apt to indulge in criticism of English customs, and no weak regard for time and place prevents Eubulides from denouncing Canning to Demosthenes. The classical dress becomes so thin on such occasions, that even the small degree of illusion which one may fairly desiderate is too rudely interrupted. The actor does

not disguise his voice enough for theatrical purposes. It is perhaps a more serious fault that the dialogue constantly lapses into monologue. We might often remove the names of the talkers as useless interruptions. Some conversations might as well be headed, in legal phraseology, Landor *v.* Landor, or at most Landor *v.* Landor and another—the other being some wretched man of straw or Guy Faux effigy dragged in to be belaboured with weighty aphorisms and talk obtrusive nonsense. Hence sometimes we resent a little the taking in vain of the name of some old friend. It is rather too hard upon Sam Johnson to be made a mere "passive bucket" into which Horne Tooke may pump his philological notions, with scarcely a feeble sputter or two to represent his smashing retorts.

There is yet another criticism or two to be added. The extreme scrupulosity with which Landor polishes his style and removes superfluities from poetical narrative, smoothing them at times till we can hardly grasp them, might have been applied to some of the wanton digressions in which the dialogues abound. We should have been glad if he had ruthlessly cut out two-thirds of the conversation between Richelieu and others, in which some charming English pastorals are mixed up

with a quantity of unmistakable rubbish. But, for the most part, we can console ourselves by a smile. When Landor lowers his head and charges bull-like at the phantom of some king or priest, we are prepared for, and amused by, his impetuosity. Malesherbes discourses with great point and vigour upon French literature, and may fairly diverge into a little politics; but it is certainly comic when he suddenly remembers one of Landor's pet grievances, and the unlucky Rousseau has to discuss a question for which few people could be more ludicrously unfit—the details of a plan for reforming the institution of English justices of the peace. The grave dignity with which the subject is introduced gives additional piquancy to the absurdity. An occasional laugh at Landor is the more valuable because, to say the truth, one is not very likely to laugh with him. Nothing is more difficult for an author—as Landor himself observes in reference to Milton—than to decide upon his own merits as a wit or humourist. I am not quite sure that this is true; for I have certainly found authors distinctly fallible in judging of their own merits as poets and philosophers. But it is undeniable that many a man laughs at his own wit who has to laugh alone. I will not take upon myself to say that Landor was without

humour; he has certainly a delicate gracefulness which may be classed with the finer kinds of humour; but if anybody (to take one instance) will read the story which Chaucer tells to Boccaccio and Petrarch and pronounce it to be amusing, I can only say that his notions of humour differ materially from mine. Some of his wrathful satire against kings and priests has a vigour which is amusing; but the tact which enables him to avoid errors of taste of a different kind often fails him when he tries the facetious.

Blemishes such as these go some way, perhaps, to account for Landor's unpopularity. But they are such as might be amply redeemed by his vigour, his fulness, and unflagging energy of style. There is no equally voluminous author of great power who does not fall short of his own highest achievements in a large part of his work, and who is not open to the remark that his achievements are not all that we could have wished. It is doubtless best to take what we can get, and not to repine if we do not get something better, the possibility of which is suggested by the actual accomplishment. If Landor had united to his own powers those of Scott or Shakespeare, he would have been improved. Landor, repenting a little for some censures of Milton, says to Southey, "Are we not somewhat like two little beggar-

boys who, forgetting that they are in tatters, sit noticing a few stains and rents in their father's raiment?" "But they love him," replies Southey, and we feel the apology to be sufficient.

Can we make it in the case of Landor? Is he a man whom we can take to our hearts, treating his vagaries and ill-humours as we do the testiness of a valued friend? Or do we feel that he is one whom it is better to have for an acquaintance than for an intimate? The problem seems to have exercised those who knew him best in life. Many, like Southey or Napier, thought him a man of true nobility and tenderness of character, and looked upon his defects as mere superficial blemishes. If some who came closer seem to have had a rather different opinion, we must allow that a man's personal defects are often unimportant in his literary capacity. It has been laid down as a general rule that poets cannot get on with their wives; and yet they are poets in virtue of being lovable at the core. Landor's domestic troubles need not indicate an incapacity for meeting our sympathies any more than the domestic troubles of Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Burns, Byron, Shelley, or many others. In his poetry a man should show his best self; and defects, important in the daily life which is made up of trifles, may cease to

trouble us when admitted to the inmost recesses of his nature.

Landor, undoubtedly, may be loved; but I fancy that he can be loved unreservedly only by a very narrow circle. For when we pass from the form to the substance—from the manner in which his message is delivered to the message itself—we find that the superficial defects rise from very deep roots. Whenever we penetrate to the underlying character, we find something harsh and uncongenial mixed with very high qualities. He has pronounced himself upon a wide range of subjects; there is much criticism, some of it of a very rare and admirable order; much theological and political disquisition; and much exposition, in various forms, of the practical philosophy which every man imbibes according to his faculties in his passage through the world. It would be undesirable to discuss seriously his political or religious notions. To say the truth, they are not really worth discussing, for they are little more than vehement explosions of unreasoning prejudice. I do not know whether Landor would have approved the famous aspiration about strangling the last of kings with the entrails of the last priest, but some such sentiment seems to sum up all that he really has to say. His doctrine so far coincides with that of Diderot and

other revolutionists, though he has no sympathy with their social aspirations. His utterances, however, remind us too much—in substance, though not in form—of the rhetoric of debating societies. They are as factitious as the old-fashioned appeals to the memory of Brutus. They would doubtless make a sensation at the Union. Diogenes tells us that "all nations, all cities, all communities, should combine in one great hunt, like that of the Scythians at the approach of winter, and follow it" (the kingly power, to wit) "up, unrelentingly to its perdition. The diadem should designate the victim; all who wear it, all who offer it, all who bow to it, should perish." Demosthenes, in less direct language, announces the same plan to Eubulides as the one truth, far more important than any other, and "more conducive to whatever is desirable to the well-educated and free." We laugh, not because the phrase is overstrained, or intended to have a merely dramatic truth, for Landor puts similar sentiments into the mouths of all his favourite speakers; but simply because we feel it to be a mere form of swearing. The language would have been less elegant, but the meaning just the same, if he had rapped out a good mouth-filling oath whenever he heard the name of king. When, in reference to some such utterances,

Mr. Carlyle said that "Landor's principle is mere rebellion," Landor was much nettled, and declared himself to be in favour of authority. He despised American republicanism, and regarded Venice as the pattern State. He sympathised in this, as in much else, with the theorists of Milton's time, and would have been approved by Harrington or Algernon Sidney; but, for all that, Mr. Carlyle seems pretty well to have hit the mark. Such republicanism is in reality nothing more than the political expression of intense pride, or, if you prefer the word, self-respect. It is the sentiment of personal dignity, which could not bear the thought that he, Landor, should have to bow the knee to a fool like George III.; or that Milton should have been regarded as the inferior of such a sneak as Charles I. But the same feeling would have been just as much shocked by the claim of a demagogue to override high-spirited gentlemen. Mobs were every whit as vile as kings. He might have stood for Shakespeare's Coriolanus, if Coriolanus had not an unfortunate want of taste in his language. Landor, indeed, being never much troubled as to consistency, is fond of dilating on the absurdity of any kind of hereditary rank; but he sympathises, to his last fibre, with the spirit fostered by the existence of an aristocratic caste, and producible,

so far as our experience has gone, in no other way. He is generous enough to hate all oppression in every form, and therefore to hate the oppression exercised by a noble as heartily as oppression exercised by a king. He is a big boy ready to fight any one who bullies his fag; but with no doubts as to the merits of fagging. But then he never chooses to look at the awkward consequences of his opinion. When talking of politics, an aristocracy full of virtue and talent, ruling on generous principles a people sufficiently educated to obey its natural leaders, is the ideal which is vaguely before his mind. To ask how it is to be produced without hereditary rank, or to be prevented from degenerating into a tyrannical oligarchy, or to be reconciled at all with modern principles, is simply to be impertinent. He answers all such questions by putting himself in imagination into the attitude of a Pericles or Demosthenes or Milton, fulminating against tyrants and keeping the mob in its place by the ascendancy of genius. To recommend Venice as a model is simply to say that you have nothing but contempt for all politics. It is as if a lad should be asked whether he preferred to join a cavalry or an infantry regiment, and should reply that he would only serve under Leonidas.

His religious principles are in the same way little

more than the assertion that he will not be fettered in mind or body by any priest on earth. The priest is to him what he was to the deists and materialists of the eighteenth century—a juggling impostor who uses superstition as an instrument for creeping into the confidence of women and cowards, and burning brave men; but he has no dreams of the advent of a religion of reason. He ridicules the notion that truth will prevail: it never has and it never will. At bottom he prefers paganism to Christianity because it was tolerant and encouraged art, and allowed philosophers to enjoy as much privilege as they can ever really enjoy—that of living in peace and knowing that their neighbours are harmless fools. After a fashion he likes his own version of Christianity, which is superficially that of many popular preachers: Be tolerant, kindly, and happy, and don't worry your head about dogmas, or become a slave to priests. But then one also feels that humility is generally regarded as an essential part of Christianity, and that in Landor's version it is replaced by something like its antithesis. You should do good, too, as you respect yourself and would be respected by men; but the chief good is the philosophic mind, which can wrap itself in its own consciousness of worth, and enjoy the finest pleasures of life without superstitious

ascetism. Let the vulgar amuse themselves with the playthings of their creed, so long as they do not take to playing with faggots. Stand apart and enjoy your own superiority with good-natured contempt.

One of his longest and, in this sense, most characteristic dialogues, is that between Penn and Peterborough. Peterborough is the ideal aristocrat with a contempt for the actual aristocracy; and Penn represents the religion of common-sense. "Teach men to calculate rightly and thou wilt have taught them to live religiously," is Penn's sentiment, and perhaps not too unfaithful to the original. No one could have a more thorough contempt for the mystical element in Quakerism than Landor; but he loves Quakers as sober, industrious, easy-going people, who regard good-humour and comfort as the ultimate aim of religious life, and who manage to do without lawyers or priests. Peterborough, meanwhile, represents his other side—the haughty, energetic, cultivated aristocrat, who, on the ground of their common aversions, can hold out a friendly hand to the quiet Quaker. Landor, of course, is both at once. He is the noble who rather enjoys giving a little scandal at times to his drab-suited companion; but, on the whole, thinks that it would be an excellent world if the common people would adopt this

harmless form of religion, which tolerates other opinions and does not give any leverage to kings, insolvent aristocrats, or intriguing bishops.

Landor's critical utterances reveal the same tendencies. Much of the criticism has of course an interest of its own. It is the judgment of a real master of language upon many technical points of style, and the judgment, moreover, of a poet who can look even upon classical poets as one who breathes the same atmosphere at an equal elevation, and who speaks out like a cultivated gentleman, not as a schoolmaster or a specialist. But putting aside this and the crotchets about spelling, which have been dignified with the name of philological theories, the general direction of his sympathies is eminently characteristic. Landor of course pays the inevitable homage to the great names of Plato, Dante, and Shakespeare, and yet it would be scarcely unfair to say that he hates Plato, that Dante gives him far more annoyance than pleasure, and that he really cares little for Shakespeare. The last might be denied on the ground of isolated expressions. "A rib of Shakspeare," he says, "would have made a Milton: the same portion of Milton all poets born ever since." But he speaks of Shakespeare in conventional terms, and seldom quotes or alludes to him. When he touches Milton his eyes

brighten and his voice takes a tone of reverent enthusiasm. His ear is dissatisfied with everything for days and weeks after the harmony of "Paradise Lost." "Leaving this magnificent temple, I am hardly to be pacified by the fairy-built chambers, the rich cupboards of embossed plate, and the omnigenous images of Shakespeare." That is his genuine impression. Some readers may appeal to that "Examination of Shakespeare" which (as we have seen) was held by Lamb to be beyond the powers of any other writer except its hero. I confess that, in my opinion, Lamb could have himself drawn a far more sympathetic portrait of Shakespeare, and that Scott would have brought out the whole scene with incomparably greater vividness. Call it a morning in an English country-house in the sixteenth century, and it will be full of charming passages along with some laborious failures. But when we are forced to think of Slender and Shallow, and Sir Hugh Evans, and the Shakespearian method of portraiture, the personages in Landor's talk seem half asleep and terribly given to twaddle. His view of Dante is less equivocal. In the whole "Inferno," Petrarca (evidently representing Landor) finds nothing admirable but the famous descriptions of Francesca and Ugolino. They are the "greater and lesser oases" in a vast

desert. And he would pare one of these fine passages to the quick, whilst the other provokes the remark ("we must whisper it") that Dante is "the great master of the disgusting." He seems really to prefer Boccaccio and Ovid, to say nothing of Homer and Virgil. Plato is denounced still more unsparingly. From Aristotle and Diogenes down to Lord Chatham, assailants are set on to worry him, and tear to pieces his gorgeous robes with just an occasional perfunctory apology. Even Lady Jane Grey is deprived of her favourite. She consents on Ascham's petition to lay aside books, but she excepts Cicero, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Polybius: the "others I do resign;" they are good for the arbour and garden walk, but not for the fireside or pillow. This is surely to wrong the poor soul; but Landor is intolerant in his enthusiasm for his philosophical favourites. Epicurus is the teacher whom he really delights to honour, and Cicero is forced to confess in his last hours that he has nearly come over to the camp of his old adversary.

It is easy to interpret the meaning of these prejudices. Landor hates and despises the romantic and the mystic. He has not the least feeling for the art which owes its powers to suggestions of the infinite, or to symbols forced into grotesqueness by the effort to express that

for which no thought can be adequate. He refuses to bother himself with allegory or dreamy speculation, and, unlike Sir T. Browne, hates to lose himself in an "O Altitudo!" He cares nothing for Dante's inner thoughts, and sees only a hideous chamber of horrors in the "Inferno." Plato is a mere compiler of idle sophistries, and contemptible to the common-sense and worldly wisdom of Locke and Bacon. In the same spirit he despised Wordsworth's philosophising as heartily as Jeffrey, and though he tried to be just, could really see nothing in him except the writer of good rustic idylls, and of one good piece of paganism, the "Laodamia."[1] From such a point of view he ranks him below Burns, Scott, and Cowper, and makes poor Southey consent—Southey who ranked Wordsworth with Milton!

These tendencies are generally summed up by speaking of Landor's objectivity and Hellenism. I have no particular objection to those words except that they seem rather vague and to leave our problem untouched. A man may be as "objective" as you please in a sense, and as thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Greek art,

[1] De Quincey gets into a curious puzzle about Landor's remarks in his essay on Milton *versus* Southey and Landor. He cannot understand to which of Wordsworth's poems Landor is referring, and makes some oddly erroneous guesses.

and yet may manage to fall in with the spirit of our own times. The truth is, I fancy, that a simpler name may be given to Landor's tastes, and that we may find them exemplified nearer home. There is many a good country gentleman who rides well to hounds, and is most heartily "objective" in the sense of hating metaphysics and elaborate allegory and unintelligible art, and preferring a glass of wine and a talk with a charming young lady to mystic communings with the world-spirit; and as for Landor's Hellenism, that surely ought not to be an uncommon phenomenon in the region of English public schools. It is an odd circumstance that we should be so much puzzled by the very man who seems to realise precisely that ideal of culture upon which our most popular system of education is apparently moulded. Here at last is a man who is really simple-minded enough to take the habit of writing Latin verses seriously; making it a consolation in trouble as well as an elegant amusement. He hopes to rest his fame upon it, and even by a marvellous *tour de force* writes a great deal of English poetry which for all the world reads exactly like a first-rate copy of modern Greek Iambics. For once we have produced just what the system ought constantly to produce, and yet we cannot make him out.

The reason for our not producing more Landors is indeed pretty simple. Men of real poetic genius are exceedingly rare at all times, and it is still rarer to find such a man who remains a schoolboy all his life. Landor is precisely a glorified and sublime edition of the model sixth-form lad, only with an unusually strong infusion of schoolboy perversion. Perverse lads, indeed, generally kick over the traces at an earlier point: and refuse to learn anything. Boys who take kindly to the classical system are generally good, that is to say, docile. They develop into prosaic tutors and professors; or, when the cares of life begin to press, they start their cargo of classical lumber and fill the void with law or politics. Landor's peculiar temperament led him to kick against authority, whilst he yet imbibed the spirit of the teaching fully, and in some respects rather too fully. He was a rebel against the outward form, and yet more faithful in spirit than most of the obedient subjects.

The impatient and indomitable temper which made quiet or continuous meditation impossible, and the accidental circumstances of his life, left him in possession of qualities which are in most men subdued or expelled by the hard discipline of life. Brought into impulsive collision with all kinds of authorities, he set

up a kind of schoolboy republicanism, and used all his poetic eloquence to give it an air of reality. But he never cared to bring it into harmony with any definite system of thought, or let his outbursts of temper transport him into settled antagonism with accepted principles. He troubled himself just as little about theological as about political theories: he was as utterly impervious as the dullest of squires to the mystic philosophy imported by Coleridge, and found the world quite rich enough in sources of enjoyment without tormenting himself about the unseen, and the ugly superstitions which thrive in mental twilight. But he had quarrelled with parsons as much as with lawyers, and could not stand the thought of a priest interfering with his affairs or limiting his amusements. And so he set up as a tolerant and hearty disciple of Epicurus. Chivalrous sentiment and an exquisite perception of the beautiful saved him from any gross interpretation of his master's principles; although, to say the truth, he shows an occasional laxity on some points which savours of the easy-going pagan, or perhaps of the noble of the old school. As he grew up he drank deep of English literature, and sympathised with the grand republican pride of Milton—as sturdy a rebel as himself, and a still nobler because more serious rhetorician. He

went to Italy, and, as he imbibed Italian literature, sympathised with the joyous spirit of Boccaccio and the eternal boyishness of classical art. Mediævalism and all mystic philosophies remained unintelligible to this true-born Englishman. Irritated rather than humbled by his incapacity, he cast them aside, pretty much as a schoolboy might throw a Plato at the head of a pedantic master.

The best and most attractive dialogues are those in which he can give free play to this Epicurean sentiment; forget his political mouthing, and inoculate us for the moment with the spirit of youthful enjoyment. Nothing can be more perfectly charming in its way than Epicurus in his exquisite garden, discoursing on his pleasant knoll, where, with violets, cyclamens, and convolvuluses clustering round, he talks to his lovely girl-disciples upon the true theory of life—temperate enjoyment of all refined pleasures, forgetfulness of all cares, and converse with true chosen spirits far from the noise of the profane vulgar: of the art, in short, by which a man of fine cultivation may make the most of this life, and learn to take death as a calm and happy subsidence into oblivion. Nor far behind is the dialogue in which Lucullus entertains Cæsar in his delightful villa, and illustrates by example, as well as

precept, Landor's favourite doctrine of the vast superiority of the literary to the active life. Politics, as he makes even Demosthenes admit, are the "sad refuge of restless minds, averse from business and from study." And certainly there are moods in which we could ask nothing better than to live in a remote villa, in which wealth and art have done everything in their power to give all the pleasures compatible with perfect refinement and contempt of the grosser tastes. Only it must be admitted that this is not quite a gospel for the million. And probably the highest triumph is in the Pentameron, where the whole scene is so vividly coloured by so many delicate touches, and such charming little episodes of Italian life, that we seem almost to have seen the fat, wheezy poet hoisting himself on to his pampered steed, to have listened to the village gossip, and followed the little flirtations in which the true poets take so kindly an interest; and are quite ready to pardon certain useless digressions and critical vagaries, and to overlook complacently any little laxity of morals.

These, and many of the shorter and more dramatic dialogues, have a rare charm, and the critic will return to analyse, if he can, their technical qualities. But little explanation can be needed, after reading them, of Landor's want of popularity. If he had applied one-

tenth part of his literary skill to expand commonplace sentiment; if he had talked that kind of gentle twaddle by which some recent essayists edify their readers, he might have succeeded in gaining a wide popularity. Or if he had been really, as some writers seem to fancy, a deep and systematic thinker as well as a most admirable artist, he might have extorted a hearing even while provoking dissent. But his boyish waywardness has disqualified him from reaching the deeper sympathies of either class. We feel that the most superhuman of schoolboys has really a rather shallow view of life. His various outbursts of wrath amuse us at best when they do not bore, even though they take the outward form of philosophy or statesmanship. He has really no answer or vestige of answer for any problems of his, nor indeed of any other time, for he has no basis of serious thought. All he can say is, ultimately, that he feels himself in a very uncongenial atmosphere, from which it is delightful to retire, in imagination, to the society of Epicurus, or the study of a few literary masterpieces. That may be very true, but it can be interesting only to a few men of similar taste; and men of profound insight, whether of the poetic or the philosophic temperament, are apt to be vexed by his hasty dogmatism and irritable rejection of much which

deserved his sympathy. His wanton quarrel with the world has been avenged by the world's indifference. We may regret the result when we see what rare qualities have been cruelly wasted, but we cannot fairly shut our eyes to the fact that the world has a very strong case.

VII.

MACAULAY.

LORD MACAULAY was pre-eminently a fortunate man; and his good fortune has survived him. Few, indeed, in the long line of English authors whom he loved so well, have been equally happy in a biographer. Most official biographies are a mixture of bungling and indiscretion. It is only in virtue of some happy coincidence that the one or two people who alone have the requisite knowledge, can produce also the requisite skill and discretion. Mr. Trevelyan is one of the exceptions to the rule. His book is such a piece of thorough literary workmanship as would have delighted its subject. By a rare felicity, the almost filial affection of the narrator conciliates the reader instead of exciting a distrust of the narrative. We feel that Macaulay's must have been a lovable character to excite such warmth of feeling, and a noble character to enable one who loved him to speak so frankly.

The ordinary biographer's idolatry is not absent, but it becomes a testimony to the hero's excellence instead of introducing a disturbing element into our estimate of his merits.

No reader of Macaulay's works will be surprised at the manliness which is stamped not less plainly upon them than upon his whole career. But few who were not in some degree behind the scenes would be prepared for the tenderness of nature which is equally conspicuous. We all recognised in Macaulay a lover of truth and political honour. We find no more than we expected, when we are told that the one circumstance upon which he looked back with some regret was the unauthorised publication by a constituent of a letter in which he had spoken too frankly of a political ally. That is indeed an infinitesimal stain upon the character of a man who rose without wealth or connection, by sheer force of intellect, to a conspicuous position amongst politicians. But we find something more than we expected in the singular beauty of Macaulay's domestic life. In his relations to his father, his sisters, and the younger generation, he was admirable. The stern religious principle and profound absorption in philanthropic labours of old Zachary Macaulay must have made the position of

his brilliant son anything but an easy one. He could hardly read a novel, or contribute to a worldly magazine, without calling down something like a reproof. The father seems to have indulged in the very questionable practice of listening to vague gossip about his son's conduct, and demanding explanations from the supposed culprit. The stern old gentleman carefully suppressed his keen satisfaction at his son's first oratorical success, and instead of praising him, growled at him for folding his arms in the presence of royalty. Many sons have turned into consummate hypocrites under such paternal discipline; and, as a rule, the system is destructive of anything like mutual confidence. Macaulay seems, in spite of all, to have been on the most cordial terms with his father to the last. Some suppression of his sentiments must indeed have been necessary; and we cannot avoid tracing certain peculiarities of the son's intellectual career to his having been condemned from an early age to habitual reticence upon the deepest of all subjects of thought.

Macaulay's relations to his sisters are sufficiently revealed in a long series of charming letters, showing, both in their playfulness and in their literary and political discussions, the unreserved respect and confidence which united them. One of them writes upon

his death: "We have lost the light of our home, the most tender, loving, generous, unselfish, devoted of friends. What he was to me for fifty years who can tell? What a world of love he poured out upon me and mine!" Reading these words at the close of the biography, we do not wonder at the glamour of sisterly affection; but admit them to be the natural expression of a perfectly sincere conviction. Can there be higher praise? His relation to children is equally charming. "He was beyond comparison the best of playfellows," writes Mr. Trevelyan; "unrivalled in the invention of games, and never weary of repeating them." He wrote long letters to his favourites; he addressed pretty little poems to them on their birthdays, and composed long nursery rhymes for their edification; whilst overwhelmed with historical labours, and grudging the demands of society, he would dawdle away whole mornings with them, and spend the afternoon in taking them to sights; he would build up a den with newspapers behind the sofa, and act the part of tiger or brigand; he would take them to the Tower, or Madame Tussaud's, or the Zoological Gardens, make puns to enliven the Polytechnic, and tell innumerable anecdotes to animate the statues in the British Museum; nor, as they grew older, did he

neglect the more dignified duty of inoculating them with the literary tastes which had been the consolation of his life. Obviously he was the ideal uncle—the uncle of optimistic fiction, but with qualifications for his task such as few fictitious uncles can possess. It need hardly be added that Macaulay was a man of noble liberality in money matters, that he helped his family when they were in difficulties, and was beloved by the servants who depended upon him. In his domestic relations he had, according to his nephew, only one serious fault—he did not appreciate canine excellence; but no man is perfect.

The thorough kindliness of the man reconciles us even to his good fortune. He was an infant phenomenon; the best boy at school; in his college days, "ladies, artists, politicians, and diners-out" at Bowood, formed a circle to hear him talk, from breakfast to dinner-time; he was famous as an author at twenty-five; accepted as a great parliamentary orator at thirty; and, as a natural consequence, caressed with effusion by editors, politicians, Whig magnates, and the clique of Holland House; by thirty-three he had become a man of mark in society, literature, and politics, and had secured his fortune by gaining a seat in the Indian Council. His later career was a series

of triumphs. He had been the main support of the greatest literary organ of his party, and the "Essays" republished from its pages became at once a standard work. The "Lays of Ancient Rome" sold like Scott's most popular poetry; the "History" caused an excitement almost unparalleled in literary annals. Not only was the first sale enormous, but it has gone on ever since increasing. The popular author was equally popular in Parliament. The benches were crammed to listen to the rare treat of his eloquence; and he had the far rarer glory of more than once turning the settled opinion of the House by a single speech. It is a more vulgar but a striking testimony to his success that he made £20,000 in one year by literature. Other authors have had their heads turned by less triumphant careers; they have descended to lower ambition, and wasted their lives in spasmodic straining to gain worthless applause. Macaulay remained faithful to his calling. He worked his hardest to the last, and became a more unsparing critic of his own performances as time went on. We do not feel even a passing symptom of a grudge against his good fortune. Rather we are moved by that kind of sentiment which expresses itself in the schoolboy phrase, "Well done our side!" We are glad to see the hearty, kindly,

truthful man crowned with all appropriate praise, and to think that for once one of our race has got so decidedly the best of it in the hard battle with the temptations and the miseries of life.

Certain shortcomings have been set off against these virtues by critics of Macaulay's life. He was, it has been said, too good a hater. At any rate he hated vice, meanness, and charlatanism. It is easier to hate such things too little than too much. But it must be admitted that his likes and dislikes indicate a certain rigidity and narrowness of nature. "In books, as in people and places," says Mr. Trevelyan, "he loved that, and loved that only, to which he had been accustomed from boyhood upwards." The faults of which this significant remark reveals one cause, are marked upon his whole literary character. Macaulay was converted to Whiggism when at college. The advance from Toryism to Whiggism is not such as to involve a very violent wrench of the moral and intellectual nature. Such as it was, it was the only wrench from which Macaulay suffered. What he was as a scholar of Trinity, he was substantially as a peer of the realm. He made, it would seem, few new friends, though he grappled his old ones as "with hooks of steel." The fault is one which belongs to many men of strong

natures, and so long as we are considering Macaulay's life we shall not be much disposed to quarrel with his innate conservatism. Strong affections are so admirable a quality that we can pardon the man who loves well though not widely; and if Macaulay had not a genuine fervour of regard for the little circle of his intimates, there is no man who deserves such praise.

It is when we turn from Macaulay's personal character to attempt an estimate of his literary position, that these faults acquire more importance. His intellectual force was extraordinary within certain limits; beyond those limits the giant became a child. He assimilated a certain set of ideas as a lad, and never acquired a new idea in later life. He accumulated vast stores of knowledge, but they all fitted into the old framework of theory. Whiggism seemed to him to provide a satisfactory solution for all political problems when he was sending his first article to "Knight's Magazine," and when he was writing the last page of his "History." "I entered public life a Whig," as he said in 1849, "and a Whig I am determined to remain." And what is meant by Whiggism in Macaulay's mouth? It means substantially that creed which registers the experience of the English upper classes during the four or five generations previous to Macaulay. It represents, not

the reasoning, but the instinctive convictions generated by the dogged insistance upon their privileges of a stubborn, high-spirited, and individually shortsighted race. To deduce it as a symmetrical doctrine from abstract propositions would be futile. It is only reasonable so far as a creed, felt out by the collective instinct of a number of more or less stupid people, becomes impressed with a quasi-rational unity, not from their respect for logic, but from the uniformity of the mode of development. Hatred to pure reason is indeed one of its first principles. A doctrine avowedly founded on logic instead of instinct becomes for that very reason suspect to it. Common-sense takes the place of philosophy. At times this mass of sentiment opposes itself under stress of circumstances to the absolute theories of monarchy, and then calls itself Whiggism. At other times it offers an equally dogged resistance to absolute theories of democracy, and then becomes nominally Tory. In Macaulay's youth, the weight of opinion had been slowly swinging round from the Toryism generated by dread of revolution, to Whiggism generated by the accumulation of palpable abuses. The growing intelligence and more rapidly growing power of the middle classes gave it at the same time a more popular character than before.

Macaulay's "conversion" was simply a process of swinging with the tide. The Clapham Sect, amongst whom he had been brought up, was already more than half Whig, in virtue of its attack upon the sacred institution of slavery by means of popular agitation. Macaulay—the most brilliant of its young men—naturally cast in his lot with the brilliant men, a little older than himself, who fought under the blue and yellow banner of the "Edinburgh Review." No great change of sentiment was necessary, though some of the old Clapham doctrines died out in his mind as he was swept into the political current.

Macaulay thus early became a thorough-going Whig. Whiggism seemed to him the *ne plus ultra* of progress: the pure essence of political wisdom. He was never fully conscious of the vast revolution in thought which was going on all around him. He was saturated with the doctrines of 1832. He stated them with unequalled vigour and clearness. Anybody who disputed them from either side of the question seemed to him to be little better than a fool. Southey and Mr. Gladstone talked arrant nonsense when they disputed the logical or practical value of the doctrines laid down by Locke. James Mill deserved the most contemptuous language for daring to push those doctrines beyond the sacred

line. When Macaulay attacks an old non-juror or a modern Tory, we can only wonder how opinions which, on his showing, are so inconceivably absurd, could ever have been held by any human being. Men are Whigs or not-Whigs, and the not-Whig is less a heretic to be anathematised than a blockhead beneath the reach of argument. All political wisdom centres in Holland House, and the "Edinburgh Review" is its prophet. There is something in the absolute confidence of Macaulay's political dogmatism which varies between the sublime and the ridiculous. We can hardly avoid laughing at this superlative self-satisfaction, and yet we must admit that it is indicative of a real political force not to be treated with simple contempt. Belief is power, even when belief is most unreasonable.

To define a Whig and to define Macaulay is pretty much the same thing. Let us trace some of the qualities which enabled one man to become so completely the type of a vast body of his compatriots.

The first and most obvious power in which Macaulay excelled his neighbours was his portentous memory. He could assimilate printed pages, says his nephew, more quickly than others could glance over them. Whatever he read was stamped upon his mind instantaneously and permanently, and he read everything. In

the midst of severe labours in India, he read enough classical authors to stock the mind of an ordinary professor. At the same time he framed a criminal code and devoured masses of trashy novels. From the works of the ancient Fathers of the Church to English political pamphlets and to modern street-ballads, no printed matter came amiss to his omnivorous appetite. All that he had read could be reproduced at a moment's notice. Every fool, he said, can repeat his Archbishops of Canterbury backwards; and he was as familiar with the Cambridge Calendar as the most devoted Protestant with the Bible. He could have re-written "Sir Charles Grandison" from memory if every copy had been lost. Now it might perhaps be plausibly maintained that the possession of such a memory is unfavourable to a high development of the reasoning powers. The case of Pascal, indeed, who is said never to have forgotten anything, shows that the two powers may co-exist; and other cases might of course be mentioned. But it is true that a powerful memory may enable a man to save himself the trouble of reasoning. It encourages the indolent propensity of deciding difficulties by precedent instead of principles. Macaulay, for example, was once required to argue the point of political casuistry as to the degree of independent action

permissible to members of a Cabinet. An ordinary mind would have to answer by striking a rough balance between the conveniences and inconveniences likely to arise. It would be forced, that is to say, to reason from the nature of the case. But Macaulay had at his fingers' end every instance from the days of Walpole to his own in which Ministers had been allowed to vote against the general policy of the Government. By quoting them, he seemed to decide the point by authority, instead of taking the troublesome and dangerous road of abstract reasoning. Thus to appeal to experience is with him to appeal to the stores of a gigantic memory; and is generally the same thing as to deny the value of all general rules. This is the true Whig doctrine of referring to precedent rather than to theory. Our popular leaders were always glad to quote Hampden and Sidney instead of venturing upon the dangerous ground of abstract rights.

Macaulay's love of deciding all points by an accumulation of appropriate instances is indeed characteristic of his mind. It is connected with a curious defect of analytical power. It appears in his literary criticism as much as in his political speculations. In an interesting letter to Mr. Napier, he states the case himself as an excuse for not writing upon Scott. "Hazlitt used to

say, 'I am nothing if not critical.' The case with me," says Macaulay, "is precisely the reverse. I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination, but I have never habituated myself to dissect them. Perhaps I enjoy them the more keenly for that very reason. Such books as Lessing's 'Laocoon,' such passages as the criticism on 'Hamlet' in 'Wilhelm Meister,' fill me with wonder and despair." If we take any of Macaulay's criticisms, we shall see how truly he had gauged his own capacity. They are either random discharges of superlatives or vigorous assertions of sound moral principles. He compliments some favourite author with an emphatic repetition of the ordinary eulogies, or shows conclusively that Montgomery was a sham poet, and Wycherley a corrupt ribald. Nobody can hit a haystack with more certainty, but he is not so good at a difficult mark. He never makes a fine suggestion as to the secrets of the art whose products he admires or dislikes. His mode, for example, of criticising Bunyan is to give a list of the passages which he remembers, and, of course, he remembers everything. He observes, what was tolerably clear, that Bunyan's allegory is as vivid as a concrete history, though strangely comparing him in this respect to Shelley—the least concrete of poets; and he makes the discovery,

which did not require his vast stores of historical knowledge, that "it is impossible to doubt that" Bunyan's trial of Christian and Faithful is meant to satirise the judges of the time of Charles II. That is as plain as that the last cartoon in "Punch" is meant to satirise Lord Beaconsfield. Macaulay can draw a most vivid portrait, so far as that can be done by a picturesque accumulation of characteristic facts, but he never gets below the surface, or details the principles whose embodiment he describes from without.

The defect is connected with further peculiarities, in which Macaulay is the genuine representative of the true Whig type. The practical value of adherence to precedent is obvious. It may be justified by the assertion that all sound political philosophy must be based upon experience: and no one will deny that assertion to contain a most important truth. But in Macaulay's mind this sound doctrine seems to be confused with the very questionable doctrine that in political questions there is no philosophy at all. To appeal to experience may mean either to appeal to facts so classified and organically arranged as to illustrate general truths, or to appeal to a mere mass of observations, without taking the trouble to elicit their true significance, or even to believe that they can be resolved into particular cases

of a general truth. This is the difference between an experiential philosophy and a crude empiricism. Macaulay takes the lower alternative. The vigorous attack upon James Mill, which he very properly suppressed during his life on account of its juvenile arrogance, curiously illustrates his mode of thought. No one can deny, I think, that he makes some very good points against a very questionable system of political dogmatism. But when we ask what are Macaulay's own principles, we are left at a stand. He ought, by all his intellectual sympathies, to be a utilitarian. Yet he abuses utilitarianism with the utmost contempt, and has no alternative theory to suggest. He ends his first Essay against Mill by one of his customary purple patches about Baconian induction. He tells us, in the second, how to apply it. Bacon proposed to discover the principle of heat by observing in what qualities all hot bodies agreed, and in what qualities all cold bodies. Similarly, we are to make a list of all constitutions which have produced good or bad government, and to investigate their points of agreement and difference. This sounds plausible to the uninstructed, but is a mere rhetorical flourish. Bacon's method is admittedly useless for reasons which I leave to men of science to explain, and Macaulay's method is equally

hopeless in politics. It is hopeless for the simple reason that the complexity of the phenomena makes it impracticable. We cannot find out what constitution is best after this fashion, simply because the goodness or badness of a constitution depends upon a thousand conditions of social, moral, and intellectual development. When stripped of its pretentious phraseology, Macaulay's teaching comes simply to this: the only rule in politics is the rule of thumb. All general principles are wrong or futile. We have found out in England that our constitution, constructed in absolute defiance of all *à priori* reasoning, is the best in the world: it is the best for providing us with the maximum of bread, beef, beer, and means of buying bread, beer, and beef: and we have got it because we have never—like those publicans the French—trusted to fine sayings about truth and justice and human rights, but blundered on, adding a patch here and knocking a hole there, as our humour prompted us.

This sovereign contempt of all speculation—simply as speculation—reaches its acme in the Essay on Bacon. The curious naïveté with which Macaulay denounces all philosophy in that vigorous production excites a kind of perverse admiration. How can one refuse to admire the audacity which enables a man explicitly to identify

philosophy with humbug? It is what ninety-nine men out of a hundred think, but not one in a thousand dares to say. Goethe says somewhere that he likes Englishmen because English fools are the most thoroughgoing of fools. English "Philistines," as represented by Macaulay, the prince of Philistines, carry their contempt of the higher intellectual interests to a pitch of real sublimity. Bacon's theory of induction, says Macaulay, in so many words, was valueless. Everybody could reason before it as well as after. But Bacon really performed a service of inestimable value to mankind; and it consisted precisely in this, that he called their attention from philosophy to the pursuit of material advantages. The old philosophers had gone on bothering about theology, ethics, and the true and beautiful, and such other nonsense. Bacon taught us to work at chemistry and mechanics, to invent diving-bells and steam-engines and spinning-jennies. We could never, it seems, have found out the advantages of this direction of our energies without a philosopher, and so far philosophy is negatively good. It has written up upon all the supposed avenues to inquiry, "No admission except on business;" that is, upon the business of direct practical discovery. We English have taken the hint, and we have therefore lived to see when a

man can breakfast in London and dine in Edinburgh, and may look forward to a day when the tops of Ben-Nevis and Helvellyn will be cultivated like flower-gardens, and machines constructed on principles yet to be discovered will be in every house.

The theory which underlies this conclusion is often explicitly stated. All philosophy has produced mere futile logomachy. Greek sages and Roman moralists and mediæval schoolmen have amassed words, and amassed nothing else. One distinct discovery of a solid truth, however humble, is worth all their labours. This condemnation applies not only to philosophy, but to the religious embodiment of philosophy. No satisfactory conclusion ever has been reached or ever will be reached in theological disputes. On all such topics, he tells Mr. Gladstone, there has always been the widest divergence of opinion. Nor are there better hopes for the future. The ablest minds, he says in the Essay upon Ranke, have believed in transubstantiation; that is, according to him, in the most ineffable nonsense. There is no certainty that men will not believe to the end of time the doctrines which imposed upon so able a man as Sir Thomas More. Not only, that is, have men been hitherto wandering in a labyrinth without a clue, but there is no chance that any clue will ever be

found. The doctrine, so familiar to our generation, of laws of intellectual development, never ever occurs to him. The collective thought of generations marks time without advancing. A guess of Sir Thomas More is as good or as bad as the guess of the last philosopher. This theory, if true, implies utter scepticism. And yet Macaulay was clearly not a sceptic. His creed was hidden under a systematic reticence, and he resisted every attempt to raise the veil with rather superfluous indignation. When a constituent dared to ask about his religious views, he denounced the rash inquirer in terms applicable to an agent of the Inquisition. He vouchsafed, indeed, the information that he was a Christian. We may accept the phrase, not only on the strength of his invariable sincerity, but because it falls in with the general turn of his arguments. He denounces the futility of the ancient moralists, but he asserts the enormous social value of Christianity.

His attitude, in fact, is equally characteristic of the man and his surroundings. The old Clapham teaching had faded in his mind; it had not produced a revolt. He retained the old hatred for slavery; and he retained, with the whole force of his affectionate nature, a reverence for the school of Wilberforce, Thornton, and his own father. He estimated most highly, not perhaps

more highly than they deserved, the value of the services rendered by them in awakening the conscience of the nation. In their persistent and disinterested labours he recognised a manifestation of the great social force of Christianity. But a belief that Christianity is useful, and even that it is true, may consist with a profound conviction of the futility of the philosophy with which it has been associated. Here again Macaulay is a true Whig. The Whig love of precedent, the Whig hatred for abstract theories, may consist with a Tory application. But the true Whig differed from the Tory in adding to these views an invincible suspicion of parsons. The first Whig battles were fought against the Church as much as against the King. From the struggle with Sacheverel down to the struggle for Catholic emancipation, Toryism and High-Church principles were associated against Whigs and Dissenters. By that kind of dumb instinct which outruns reason, the Whig had learnt that there was some occult bond of union between the claims of a priesthood and the claims of a monarchy. The old maxim, "No bishop, no king," suggested the opposite principle that you must keep down the clergy if you would limit the monarchy. The natural interpretation of this prejudice into political theory, is that the Church is extremely useful as an

ally of the constable, but possesses a most dangerous explosive power if allowed to claim independent authority. In practice we must resist all claims of the Church to dictate to the State. In theory we must deny the foundation upon which such claims can alone be founded. Dogmatism must be pronounced to be fundamentally irrational. Nobody knows anything about theology; or, what is the same thing, no two people agree. As they don't agree, they cannot claim to impose their beliefs upon others.

This sentiment comes out curiously in the characteristic Essay just mentioned. Macaulay says, in reply to Mr. Gladstone, that there is no more reason for the introduction of religious questions into State affairs than for introducing them into the affairs of a Canal Company. He puts his argument with an admirable vigour and clearness which blinds many readers to the fact that he is begging the question by evading the real difficulty. If, in fact, Government had as little to do as a Canal Company with religious opinion, we should have long ago learnt the great lesson of toleration. But that is just the very *crux*. Can we draw the line between the spiritual and the secular? Nothing, replies Macaulay, is easier; and his method has been already indicated. We all agree that we

don't want to be robbed or murdered: we are by no means all agreed about the doctrine of Trinity. But, says a churchman, a certain creed is necessary to men's moral and spiritual welfare, and therefore of the utmost importance even for the prevention of robbery and murder. This is what Macaulay implicitly denies. The whole of dogmatic theology belongs to that region of philosophy, metaphysics, or whatever you please to call it, in which men are doomed to dispute for ever without coming any nearer to a decision. All that the statesman has to do with such matters is to see that if men are fools enough to speculate, they shall not be allowed to cut each other's throats when they reach, as they always must reach, contradictory results. If you raise a difficult point—such, for example, as the education question—Macaulay replies, as so many people have replied before and since, Teach the people "those principles of morality which are common to all the forms of Christianity." That is easier said than done! The plausibility of the solution in Macaulay's mouth is due to the fundamental assumption that everything except morality is hopeless ground of inquiry. Once get beyond the Ten Commandments and you will sink in a bottomless morass of argument, counter-argument,

quibble, logomachy, superstition, and confusion worse confounded.

In Macaulay's teaching, as in that of his party, there is doubtless much that is noble. He has a righteous hatred of oppression in all shapes and disguises. He can tear to pieces with great logical power many of the fallacies alleged by his opponents. Our sympathies are certainly with him as against men who advocate persecution on any grounds, and he is fully qualified to crush his ordinary opponents. But it is plain that his whole political and (if we may use the word) philosophical teaching rests on something like a downright aversion to the higher order of speculation. He despises it. He wants something tangible and concrete —something in favour of which he may appeal to the immediate testimony of the senses. He must feel his feet planted on the solid earth. The pain of attempting to soar into higher regions is not compensated to him by the increased width of horizon. And in this respect he is but the type of most of his countrymen, and reflects what has been (as I should say) erroneously called their "unimaginative" view of things in general.

Macaulay, at any rate, distinctly belongs to the imaginative class of minds, if only in virtue of his instinctive preference of the concrete to the abstract,

and his dislike, already noticed, to analysis. He has a thirst for distinct and vivid images. He reasons by examples instead of appealing to formulæ. There is a characteristic account in Mr. Trevelyan's volumes of his habit of rambling amongst the older parts of London, his fancy teeming with stories attached to the picturesque fragments of antiquity, and carrying on dialogues between imaginary persons as vivid, if not as forcible, as those of Scott's novels. To this habit—rather inverting the order of cause and effect—he attributes his accuracy of detail. We would rather say that the intensity of the impressions generates both the accuracy and the day-dreams. A philosopher would be arguing in his daily rambles where an imaginative mind is creating a series of pictures. But Macaulay's imagination is as definitely limited as his speculation. The genuine poet is also a philosopher. He sees intuitively what the reasoner evolves by argument. The greatest minds in both classes are equally marked by their naturalisation in the lofty regions of thought, inaccessible or uncongenial to men of inferior stamp. It is tempting in some ways to compare Macaulay to Burke. Burke's superiority is marked by this, that he is primarily a philosopher, and therefore instinctively sees the illustration of a general law in every particular

fact. Macaulay, on the contrary, gets away from theory as fast as possible, and tries to conceal his poverty of thought under masses of ingenious illustration.

His imaginative narrowness would come out still more clearly by a comparison with Mr. Carlyle. One significant fact must be enough. Every one must have observed how powerfully Mr. Carlyle expresses the emotion suggested by the brief appearance of some little waif from past history. We may remember, for example, how the usher, De Brézé, appears for a moment to utter the last shriek of the old monarchical etiquette, and then vanishes into the dim abysses of the past. The imagination is excited by the little glimpse of light flashing for a moment upon some special point in the cloudy phantasmagoria of human history. The image of a past existence is projected for a moment upon our eyes, to make us feel how transitory is life, and how rapidly one visionary existence expels another. We are such stuff as dreams are made of:—

> None other than a moving row
> Of visionary shapes that come and go
> Around the sun-illumined lantern held
> In midnight by the master of the show.

Every object is seen against the background of eternal mystery. In Macaulay's pages this element is altogether absent. We see a figure from the past as vividly as if

he were present. We observe the details of his dress, the odd oaths with which his discourse is interlarded, the minute peculiarities of his features or manner. We laugh or admire as we should do at a living man; and we rightly admire the force of the illusion. But the thought never suggests itself that we too are passing into oblivion, that our little island of daylight will soon be shrouded in the gathering mist, and that we tread at every instant on the dust of forgotten continents. We treat the men of past ages quite at our ease. We applaud and criticise Hampden or Chatham as we should applaud Peel or Cobden. There is no atmospheric effect—no sense of the dim march of ages, or of the vast procession of human life. It is doubtless a great feat to make the past present. It is a greater to emancipate us from the tyranny of the present, and to raise us to a point at which we feel that we too are almost as dreamlike as the men of old time. To gain clearness and definition Macaulay has dropped the element of mystery. He sees perfectly whatever can be seen by the ordinary lawyer, or politician, or merchant; he is insensible to the visions which reveal themselves only to minds haunted by thoughts of eternity, and delighting to dwell in the borderland where dreams blend with realities. Mysticism is to him hateful, and

historical figures form groups of individuals, not symbols of forces working behind the veil.

Macaulay, therefore, can be no more a poet in the sense in which the word is applied to Spenser, or to Wordsworth, both of whom he holds to be simply intolerable bores, than he can be a metaphysician or a scientific thinker. In common phraseology, he is a Philistine—a word which I understand properly to denote indifference to the higher intellectual interests. The word may also be defined, however, as the name applied by prigs to the rest of their species. And I hold that the modern fashion of using it as a common term of abuse amounts to a literary nuisance. It enables intellectual coxcombs to brand men with an offensive epithet for being a degree more manly than themselves. There is much that is good in your Philistine; and when we ask what Macaulay was, instead of showing what he was not, we shall perhaps find that the popular estimate is not altogether wrong.

Macaulay was not only a typical Whig, but the prophet of Whiggism to his generation. Though not a poet or a philosopher, he was a born rhetorician. His parliamentary career proves his capacity sufficiently, though want of the physical qualifications, and of exclusive devotion to political success, prevented him, as

perhaps a want of subtlety or flexibility of mind would have always prevented him, from attaining excellence as a debater. In everything that he wrote, however, we see the true rhetorician. He tells us that Fox wrote debates, whilst Mackintosh spoke essays. Macaulay did both. His compositions are a series of orations on behalf of sound Whig views, whatever their external form. Given a certain audience—and every orator supposes a particular audience—their effectiveness is undeniable. Macaulay's may be composed of ordinary Englishmen, with a moderate standard of education. His arguments are adapted to the ordinary Cabinet Minister, or, what is much the same, to the person who is willing to pay a shilling to hear an evening lecture. He can hit an audience composed of such materials—to quote Burke's phrase about George Grenville—"between wind and water." He uses the language, the logic, and the images which they can fully understand; and though his hearer, like his schoolboy, is ostensibly credited at times with a portentous memory, Macaulay always takes excellent care to put him in mind of the facts which he is assumed to remember. The faults and the merits of his style follow from his resolute determination to be understood of the people. He was specially delighted, as his nephew tells us, by a reader at Messrs.

Spottiswoode's, who said that in all the "History" there was only one sentence the meaning of which was not obvious to him at first sight. We are more surprised that there was one such sentence. Clearness is the first of the cardinal virtues of style; and nobody ever wrote more clearly than Macaulay. He sacrifices much, it is true, in order to obtain it. He proves that two and two make four with a pertinacity which would make him dull, if it were not for his abundance of brilliant illustration. He always remembers the principle which should guide a barrister in addressing a jury. He has not merely to exhibit his proofs, but to hammer them into the heads of his audience by incessant repetition. It is no small proof of artistic skill that a writer who systematically adopts this method should yet be invariably lively. He goes on blacking the chimney with a persistency which somehow amuses us because he puts so much heart into his work. He proves the most obvious truths again and again; but his vivacity never flags. This tendency undoubtedly leads to great defects of style. His sentences are monotonous and mechanical. He has a perfect hatred of pronouns, and for fear of a possible entanglement between "hims" and "hers" and "its," he will repeat not merely a substantive, but a whole group of substantives. Sometimes, to make his

sense unmistakable, he will repeat a whole formula, with only a change in the copula. For the same reason, he hates all qualifications and parentheses. Each thought must be resolved into its constituent parts; each argument must be expressed as a simple proposition: and his paragraphs are rather aggregates of independent atoms than possessed of a continuous unity. His writing—to use a favourite formula of his own—bears the same relation to a style of graceful modulation that a bit of mosaic work bears to a picture. Each phrase has its distinct hue, instead of melting into its neighbours. Here we have a black patch and there a white. There are no half tones, no subtle interblending of different currents of thought. It is partly for this reason that his descriptions of character are often so unsatisfactory. He likes to represent a man as a bundle of contradictions, because it enables him to obtain startling contrasts. He heightens a vice in one place, a virtue in another, and piles them together in a heap, without troubling himself to ask whether nature can make such monsters, or preserve them if made. To any one given to analysis, these contrasts are actually painful. There is a story of the Duke of Wellington having once stated that the rats got into his bottles in Spain. "They must have been very large bottles or

very small rats," said somebody. "On the contrary," replied the Duke, "the rats were very large and the bottles very small." Macaulay delights in leaving us face to face with such contrasts in more important matters. Boswell must, we would say, have been a clever man or his biography cannot have been so good as you say. On the contrary, says Macaulay, he was the greatest of fools and the best of biographers. He strikes a discord and purposely fails to resolve it. To men of more delicate sensibility the result is an intolerable jar.

For the same reason, Macaulay's genuine eloquence is marred by the symptoms of malice prepense. When he sews on a purple patch, he is resolved that there shall be no mistake about it; it must stand out from a radical contrast of colours. The emotion is not to swell by degrees, till you find yourself carried away in the torrent which set out as a tranquil stream. The transition is deliberately emphasised. On one side of a full stop you are listening to a matter-of-fact statement; on the other, there is all at once a blare of trumpets and a beating of drums, till the crash almost deafens you. He regrets in one of his letters that he has used up the celebrated, and, it must be confessed, really forcible passage about the impeachment scene in Westminster Hall. It might have come in usefully in

the "History," which, as he then hoped, might come down to Warren Hastings. The regret is unpleasantly suggestive of that deliberation in the manufacture of eloquence which stamps it as artificial.

Such faults may annoy critics, even of no very sensitive fibre. What is it that redeems them? The first answer is, that the work is impressive because it is thoroughly genuine. The stream, it is true, comes forth by spasmodic gushes, when it ought to flow in a continuous current; but it flows from a full reservoir instead of being pumped from a shallow cistern. The knowledge and, what is more, the thoroughly-assimilated knowledge, is enormous. Mr. Trevelyan has shown in detail what we had all divined for ourselves, how much patient labour is often employed in a paragraph or the turn of a phrase. To accuse Macaulay of superficiality is, in this sense, altogether absurd. His speculation may be meagre, but his store of information is simply inexhaustible. Mr. Mill's writing was impressive, because one often felt that a single argument condensed the result of a long process of reflection. Macaulay has the lower but similar merit that a single picturesque touch implies incalculable masses of knowledge. It is but an insignificant part of the building which appears above ground. Compare a passage with the assigned

authority, and you are inclined to accuse him—sometimes it may be rightfully—of amplifying and modifying. But more often the particular authority is merely the nucleus round which a whole volume of other knowledge has crystallised. A single hint is significant to a properly-prepared mind of a thousand facts not explicitly contained in it. Nobody, he said, could judge of the accuracy of one part of his "History" who had not "soaked his mind with the transitory literature of the day." His real authority was not this or that particular passage, but a literature. And for this reason alone, Macaulay's historical writings have a permanent value which will prevent them from being superseded even by more philosophical thinkers, whose minds have not undergone the "soaking" process.

It is significant again that imitations of Macaulay are almost as offensive as imitations of Carlyle. Every great writer has his parasites. Macaulay's false glitter and jingle, his frequent flippancy and superficiality of thought, are more easily caught than his virtues; but so are all faults. Would-be followers of Mr. Carlyle catch the strained gestures without the rapture of his inspiration. Would-be followers of Mr. Mill fancied themselves to be logical when they were only hopelessly unsympathetic and unimaginative; and would-be fol-

lowers of some other writers can be effeminate and foppish without being subtle or graceful. Macaulay's thoroughness of work has, perhaps, been less contagious than we could wish. Something of the modern raising of the standard of accuracy in historical inquiry may be set down to his influence. The misfortune is that, if some writers have learnt from him to be flippant without learning to be laborious, others have caught the accuracy without the liveliness. In the later volumes of his "History," his vigour began to be a little clogged by the fulness of his knowledge; and we can observe symptoms of the tendency of modern historians to grudge the sacrifice of sifting their knowledge. They read enough, but instead of giving us the results, they tumble out the accumulated mass of raw materials upon our devoted heads, till they make us long for a fire in the State Paper Office.

Fortunately, Macaulay did not yield to this temptation in his earlier writings, and the result is that he is, for the ordinary reader, one of the two authorities for English history, the other being Shakespeare. Without comparing their merits, we must admit that the compression of so much into a few short narratives shows intensity as well as compass of mind. He could digest as well as devour, and he tried his digestion pretty

severely. It is fashionable to say that part of his practical force is due to the training of parliamentary life. Familiarity with the course of affairs doubtless strengthened his insight into history, and taught him the value of downright common-sense in teaching an average audience. Speaking purely from the literary point of view, I cannot agree further in the opinion suggested. I suspect the "History" would have been better if Macaulay had not been so deeply immersed in all the business of legislation and electioneering. I do not profoundly reverence the House of Commons' tone—even in the House of Commons; and in literature it easily becomes a nuisance. Familiarity with the actual machinery of politics tends to strengthen the contempt for general principles, of which Macaulay had an ample share. It encourages the illusion of the fly upon the wheel, the doctrine that the dust and din of debate and the worry of lobbies and committee-rooms are not the effect but the cause of the great social movement. The historian of the Roman Empire, as we know, owed something to the captain of Hampshire Militia; but years of life absorbed in parliamentary wrangling and in sitting at the feet of the philosophers of Holland House were not likely to widen a mind already disposed to narrow views of the world.

For Macaulay's immediate success, indeed, the training was undoubtedly valuable. As he carried into Parliament the authority of a great writer, so he wrote books with the authority of the practical politician. He has the true instinct of affairs. He knows what are the immediate motives which move masses of men; and is never misled by fanciful analogies or blindfolded by the pedantry of official language. He has seen flesh-and-blood statesmen—at any rate, English statesmen—and understands the nature of the animal. Nobody can be freer from the dominion of crotchets. All his reasoning is made of the soundest common-sense, and represents, if not the ultimate forces, yet forces with which we have to reckon. And he knows, too, how to stir the blood of the average Englishman. He understands most thoroughly the value of concentration, unity, and simplicity. Every speech or essay forms an artistic whole, in which some distinct moral is vigorously driven home by a succession of downright blows. This strong rhetorical instinct is shown conspicuously in the "Lays of Ancient Rome," which, whatever we might say of them as poetry, are an admirable specimen of rhymed rhetoric. We know how good they are when we see how incapable are modern ballad-writers in general of putting the same swing and

fire into their verses. Compare, for example, Aytoun's "Lays of the Cavaliers," as the most obvious parallel :—

> Not swifter pours the avalanche
> Adown the steep incline,
> That rises o'er the parent springs
> Of rough and rapid Rhine,

than certain Scotch heroes over an entrenchment. Place this mouthing by any parallel passage in Macaulay :—

> Now, by our sire Quirinus,
> It was a goodly sight
> To see the thirty standards
> Swept down the tide of flight.
> So flies the spray in Adria
> When the black squall doth blow,
> So corn-sheaves in the flood time
> Spin down the whirling Po.

And so on in verses, which innumerable schoolboys of inferior pretensions to Macaulay's know by heart. And in such cases the verdict of the schoolboy is perhaps more valuable than that of the literary connoisseur. There are, of course, many living poets who can do tolerably something of far higher quality which Macaulay could not do at all. But I don't know who, since Scott, could have done this particular thing. Possibly Mr. Kingsley might have approached it, or the poet, if he would have condescended so far, who sang the bearing of the good news from Ghent to Aix. In

any case, the feat is significant of Macaulay's true power. It looks easy; it involves no demands upon the higher reasoning or imaginative powers: but nobody will believe it to be easy who observes the extreme rarity of a success in a feat so often attempted.

A similar remark is suggested by Macaulay's "Essays." Read such an essay as those upon Clive, or Warren Hastings, or Chatham. The story seems to tell itself. The characters are so strongly marked, the events fall so easily into their places, that we fancy that the narrator's business has been done to his hand. It wants little critical experience to discover that this massive simplicity is really indicative of an art not, it may be, of the highest order, but truly admirable for its purpose. It indicates not only a gigantic memory, but a glowing mind, which has fused a crude mass of materials into unity. If we do not find the sudden touches which reveal the philosophical sagacity or the imaginative insight of the highest order of intellects, we recognise the true rhetorical instinct. The outlines may be harsh, and the colours too glaring; but the general effect has been carefully studied. The details are wrought in with consummate skill. We indulge in an intercalary pish! here and there; but we are fascinated and we remember. The actual amount of intellectual force which goes to

the composition of such written archives is immense, though the quality may leave something to be desired. Shrewd common-sense may be an inferior substitute for philosophy, and the faculty which brings remote objects close to the eye of an ordinary observer for the loftier faculty which tinges everyday life with the hues of mystic contemplation. But when the common faculties are present in so abnormal a degree, they begin to have a dignity of their own.

It is impossible in such matters to establish any measure of comparison. No analysis will enable us to say how much pedestrian capacity may be fairly regarded as equivalent to a small capacity for soaring above the solid earth, and therefore the question as to the relative value of Macaulay's work and that of some men of loftier aims and less perfect execution must be left to individual taste. We can only say that it is something so to have written the history of many national heroes as to make their faded glories revive to active life in the memory of their countrymen. So long as Englishmen are what they are—and they don't seem to change as rapidly as might be wished—they will turn to Macaulay's pages to gain a vivid impression of our greatest achievements during an important period.

Nor is this all. The fire which glows in Macaulay's

history, the intense patriotic feeling, the love of certain moral qualities, is not altogether of the highest kind. His ideal of national and individual greatness might easily be criticised. But the sentiment, as far as it goes, is altogether sound and manly. He is too fond, it has been said, of incessant moralising. From a scientific point of view the moralising is irrelevant. We want to study the causes and the nature of great social movements; and when we are stopped in order to inquire how far the prominent actors in them were hurried beyond ordinary rules, we are transported into a different order of thought. It would be as much to the purpose if we reproved an earthquake for upsetting a fort, and blamed it for moving the foundations of a church. Macaulay can never understand this point of view. With him, history is nothing more than a sum of biographies. And even from a biographical point of view his moralising is often troublesome. He not only insists upon transporting party prejudice into his estimates, and mauls poor James II. as he mauled the Tories in 1832; but he applies obviously inadequate tests. It is absurd to call upon men engaged in a life-and-death wrestle to pay scrupulous attention to the ordinary rules of politeness. There are times when judgments guided by constitutional precedent

become ludicrously out of place, and when the best man is he who aims straightest at the heart of his antagonist. But, in spite of such drawbacks, Macaulay's genuine sympathy for manliness and force of character generally enables him to strike pretty nearly the true note. To learn the true secret of Cromwell's character we must go to Mr. Carlyle, who can sympathise with deep currents of religious enthusiasm. Macaulay retains too much of the old Whig distrust for all that it calls fanaticism fully to recognise the grandeur beneath the grotesque outside of the Puritan. But Macaulay tells us most distinctly why Englishmen warm at the name of the great Protector. We, like the banished Cavaliers, "glow with an emotion of national pride" at his animated picture of the unconquerable Ironsides. One phrase may be sufficiently illustrative. After quoting Clarendon's story of the Scotch nobleman who forced Charles to leave the field of Naseby by seizing his horse's bridle, "no man," says Macaulay, "who had much value for his life, would have tried to perform the same friendly office on that day for Oliver Cromwell."

Macaulay, in short, always feels, and therefore communicates, a hearty admiration for sheer manliness. And some of his portraits of great men have therefore

a genuine power, and show the deeper insight which comes from true sympathy. He estimates the respectable observer of constitutional proprieties too highly; he is unduly repelled by the external oddities of the truly masculine and noble Johnson; but his enthusiasm for his pet hero, William, or for Chatham or Clive, carries us along with him. And at moments when he is narrating their exploits, and can forget his elaborate argumentations and refrain from bits of deliberate bombast, the style becomes graphic in the higher sense of a much-abused word, and we confess that we are listening to genuine eloquence. Putting aside for the moment recollection of foibles, almost too obvious to deserve the careful demonstration which they have sometimes received, we are glad to surrender ourselves to the charm of his straightforward, clear-headed, hard-hitting declamation. There is no writer with whom it is easier to find fault, or the limits of whose power may be more distinctly defined; but within his own sphere he goes forward, as he went through life, with a kind of grand confidence in himself and his cause, which is attractive, and at times even provocative of sympathetic enthusiasm.

Macaulay said, in his Diary, that he wrote his "History" with an eye to a remote past and a remote future.

He meant to erect a monument more enduring than brass, and the ambition at least stimulated him to admirable thoroughness of workmanship. How far his aim was secured must be left to the decision of a posterity which will not trouble itself about the susceptibilities of candidates for its favour. In one sense, however, Macaulay must be interesting so long as the type which he so fully represents continues to exist. Whig has become an old-fashioned phrase, and is repudiated by modern Liberals and Radicals, who think themselves wiser than their fathers. The decay of the old name implies a remarkable political change; but I doubt whether it implies more than a very superficial change in the national character. New classes and new ideas have come upon the stage; but they have a curious family likeness to the old. The Whiggism, whose peculiarities Macaulay reflected so faithfully, represents some of the most deeply-seated tendencies of the national character. It has, therefore, both its ugly and its honourable side. Its disregard, or rather its hatred, for pure reason, its exaltation of expediency above truth and precedent above principle, its instinctive dread of strong religious or political faiths, are of course questionable qualities. Yet even they have their nobler side. There is something almost sublime about the grand unreasonableness

of the average Englishman. His dogged contempt for all foreigners and philosophers, his intense resolution to have his own way and use his own eyes, to see nothing that does not come within his narrow sphere of vision, and to see it quite clearly before he acts upon it, are of course abhorrent to thinkers of a different order. But they are great qualities in the struggle for existence which must determine the future of the world. The Englishman, armed in his panoply of self-content, and grasping facts with unequalled tenacity, goes on trampling upon acuter sensibilities, but somehow shouldering his way successfully through the troubles of the universe. Strength may be combined with stupidity, but even then it is not to be trifled with. Macaulay's sympathy with these qualities led to some annoying peculiarities, to a certain brutal insularity, and to a commonness, sometimes a vulgarity, of style which is easily criticised. But, at least, we must confess that, to use an epithet which always comes up in speaking of him, he is a thoroughly manly writer. There is nothing silly or finical about him. He sticks to his colours resolutely and honourably. If he flatters his countrymen, it is the unconscious and spontaneous effect of his participation in their weaknesses. He never knowingly calls black white, or panders to an ungenerous

sentiment. He is combative to a fault, but his combativeness is allied to a genuine love of fair-play. When he hates a man, he calls him knave or fool with unflinching frankness, but he never uses a base weapon. The wounds which he inflicts may hurt, but they do not fester. His patriotism may be narrow, but it implies faith in the really good qualities, the manliness, the spirit of justice, and the strong moral sense of his countrymen. He is proud of the healthy vigorous stock from which he springs; and the fervour of his enthusiasm, though it may shock a delicate taste, has embodied itself in writings which will long continue to be the typical illustration of qualities of which we are all proud at bottom—indeed, be it said in passing, a good deal too proud.

VIII.

CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

THE well-known phrase as to critics being made of poets who have failed requires to be supplemented. The best critics are often the poets who have succeeded; a truth which has been more than once illustrated by Mr. Swinburne. I shall not ask whether this can be said unreservedly in reference to his recent essay upon Miss Brontë. As usual, he bestows the most enthusiastic and generous praise with a lavish hand, and bestows it upon worthy objects. And, as usual, he seems to be a little too much impressed with the necessary connection between illuminating in honour of a hero and breaking the windows or burning the effigies of the hero's rivals. I do not wish to examine the justice of his assaults, and still less to limp on halting and prosaic feet after his bounding rhetoric. I propose only to follow an inquiry suggested by a part of his argument. After

all, though criticism cannot boast of being a science, it ought to aim at something like a scientific basis, or at least to proceed in a scientific spirit. The critic, therefore, before abandoning himself to the oratorical impulse, should endeavour to classify the phenomena with which he is dealing as calmly as if he were ticketing a fossil in a museum. The most glowing eulogy, the most bitter denunciation, have their proper place; but they belong to the art of persuasion, and form no part of scientific method. Our literary, like our religious, creed should rest upon a purely rational ground, and be exposed to logical tests. Our faith in an author must, in the first instance, be the product of instinctive sympathy, instead of deliberate reason. It may be propagated by the contagion of enthusiasm, and preached with all the fervour of proselytism. But when we are seeking to justify our emotions, we must endeavour to get for the time into the position of an independent spectator, applying with rigid impartiality such methods as are best calculated to free us from the influence of personal bias.

Undoubtedly it is a very difficult task to be alternately witness and judge; to feel strongly, and yet to analyse coolly; to love every feature in a familiar face, and yet to decide calmly upon its intrinsic ugli-

ness or beauty. To be an adequate critic is almost to be a contradiction in terms; to be susceptible to a force, and yet free from its influence; to be moving with the stream, and yet to be standing on the bank. It is especially difficult in the case of writers like Miss Brontë, and of critics who were in the most enthusiastic age when her fame was in its early freshness. It is almost impossible not to have overpowering prejudices in regard to a character so intense, original, and full of special idiosyncrasy. If you did not love her you must hate her; or, since hatred for so noble a sufferer would imply unreasonable brutality, we may say, feel strongly a hopeless uncongeniality of temperament. The power of exciting such feelings is, indeed, some testimony to an author's intrinsic force; and it may explain the assertion of her latest biographer. If it be true, as he says, that she has been comparatively neglected of late years, that is what may easily happen in the case of writers more remarkable for intensity than comprehensive power. Their real audience must always be the comparatively small number who are in sympathy with their peculiar moods. But their vigour begins by impressing and overawing a large number of persons who do not feel this spontaneous sympathy. They conquer by sheer force minds whom they do

not attract by milder methods. In literature, at any rate, violent conquests are generally transitory; and, after a time, those who have obeyed the rule against their natural inclination, fall away and leave an audience composed of those alone who have been swayed by a deeper attraction. Charlotte Brontë, and perhaps her sister Emily in an even higher degree, must have a certain interest for all intelligent observers of character. But only a minority will thoroughly and unreservedly enjoy the writings which embody so peculiar an essence. Some scenery—rich pasturage and abounding rivers and forest-clad hills—appeals more or less to everybody. It is only a few who really love the lonely cairn on a wind-swept moor. An accident may make it the fashion to affect admiration for such peculiar aspects of nature; but, like all affectations, it will die away after a time, and the faithful lovers be reduced to a narrow band.

The comparative eclipse, then—if eclipse there be—of Charlotte Brontë's fame, does not imply want of power, but want of comprehensiveness. There is a certain *primâ facie* presumption against a writer who appeals only to a few, though it may be amply rebutted by showing that the few are also fit. The two problems must go together; why is the charm so

powerful, and why is it so limited? Any intense personality has so far a kind of double-edged influence. Shakespeare sympathises with everybody, and therefore every one with him. Swift scorns and loathes a great part of the world, and therefore if people in general read Swift, or said honestly what they felt, most readers would confess to a simple feeling of aversion to his writings. There is, however, a further distinction. One may dislike such a man as Swift, but one cannot set him aside. His amazing intellectual vigour, the power with which he states some of the great problems of life, and the trenchant decision of his answer, give him a right to be heard. We may shudder, but we are forced to listen. If with equal force of character his intellectual power had been less, we should feel the shock without the mysterious attraction. He would be an unpleasant phenomenon, and one which might be simply neglected. It is because he brings his peculiar views to bear upon problems of universal interest that we cannot afford simply to drop him out of mind. The power of grasping general truths is necessary to give a broad base to a writer's fame, though his capacity for tender and deep emotion is that which makes us love or hate him.

Mr. Swinburne takes Miss Brontë to illustrate the distinction between "genius" and "intellect." Genius, he says, as the most potent faculty, can most safely dispense with its ally. If genius be taken to mean the poetic as distinguished from the scientific type of mind—that which sees intuitively, prefers synthesis to analysis, and embodies ideas in concrete symbols instead of proceeding by rule and measure, and constructing diagrams in preference to drawing pictures—the truth is undeniable and important. The reasoner gives us mechanism and constructs automata, where the seer creates living and feeling beings. The contrast used to be illustrated by the cases of Jonson and Shakespeare—by the difference between the imaginative vigour of "Antony and Cleopatra," and the elaborate construction of "Sejanus." We must add, however, that the two qualities of mind are not mutually exclusive. The most analytic mind has some spark of creative power, and the great creators are capable of deliberate dissection. Shakespeare could reflect; and Jonson could see. The ideally perfect mind would be capable of applying each method with equal facility in its proper place.

Genius, therefore, manifested in any high degree, must be taken to include intellect, if the words are to

be used in this sense. Genius begins where intellect ends; or takes by storm where intellect has to make elaborate approaches according to the rules of scientific strategy. One sees where the other demonstrates, but the same principles are common to both. To say that a writer shows more genius than intellect may mean simply that, as an artist, he proceeds by the true artistic method, and does not put us off with scientific formulæ galvanised into an internal semblance of life. But it may mean that his reflective powers are weak, that he has not assimilated the seminal ideas of his time, and is at a loss in the higher regions of philosophic thought. If so, you are setting limits to the sphere of his influence, and showing that he is incapable of uttering the loftiest aspirations and the deepest emotions of his fellows. A great religious teacher may prefer a parable to a theory, but the parable is impressive because it gives the most vivid embodiment of a truly philosophical theory.

Miss Brontë, as her warmest admirers would grant, was not and did not in the least affect to be a philosophical thinker. And because a great writer, to whom she has been gratuitously compared, is strong just where she is weak, her friends have an injudicious desire to make out that the matter is of no import-

ance, and that her comparative poverty of thought is no injury to her work. There is no difficulty in following them so far as to admit that her work is none the worse for containing no theological or philosophical disquisitions, or for showing no familiarity with the technicalities of modern science and metaphysics. But the admission by no means follows that her work does not suffer very materially by the comparative narrowness of the circle of ideas in which her mind habitually revolved. Perhaps if she had been familiar with Hegel or Sir W. Hamilton, she would have intruded undigested lumps of metaphysics, and introduced vexatious allusions to the philosophy of identity or to the principle of the excluded middle. But it is possible, also, that her conceptions of life and the world would have been enriched and harmonised, and that, without giving us more scientific dogmas, her characters would have embodied more fully the dominating ideas of the time. There is no province of inquiry—historical, scientific, or philosophical—from which the artist may not derive useful material; the sole question is whether it has been properly assimilated and transformed by the action of the poetic imagination. By attempting to define how far Miss Brontë's powers were in fact thus bounded, we shall

approximately decide her place in the great hierarchy of imaginative thinkers. That it was a very high one, I take to be undeniable. Putting aside living writers, the only female novelist whom one can put distinctly above her is George Sand; for Miss Austen, whom most critics place upon a still higher level, differs so widely in every way that "comparison" is absurd. It is almost silly to draw a parallel between writers when every great quality in one is "conspicuous by its absence" in the other.

The most obvious of all remarks about Miss Brontë is the close connection between her life and her writings. Nobody ever put so much of themselves into their work. She is the heroine of her two most powerful novels; for Lucy Snowe is avowedly her own likeness, and Lucy Snowe differs only by accidents from Jane Eyre; whilst her sister is the heroine of the third novel. All the minor characters, with scarcely an exception, are simply portraits, and the more successful in proportion to their fidelity. The scenery and even the incidents are, for the most part, equally direct transcripts from reality. And, as this is almost too palpable a peculiarity to be expressly mentioned, it seems to be an identical proposition that the study of her life is the study of her novels. More or less true

of all imaginative writers, this must be pre-eminently true of Miss Brontë. Her experience, we would say, has been scarcely transformed in passing through her mind. She has written down not only her feelings, but the more superficial accidents of her life. She has simply given fictitious names and dates, with a more or less imaginary thread of narrative, to her own experience at school, as a governess, at home, and in Brussels. "Shirley" contains a continuous series of photographs of Haworth and its neighbourhood; as "Villette" does of Brussels: and if "Jane Eyre" is not so literal, except in the opening account of the school-life, much of it is almost as strictly autobiographical. It is one of the oddest cases of an author's self-delusion that Miss Brontë should have imagined that she could remain anonymous after the publication of "Shirley," and the introduction of such whole-length portraits from the life as the Yorke family. She does not appear to have been herself conscious of the closeness of her adherence to facts. "You are not to suppose," she says in a letter given by Mrs. Gaskell, "any of the characters in 'Shirley' intended as real portraits. It would not suit the rules of art, nor of my own feelings, to write in that style. We only suffer reality to *suggest*, never to *dictate*." She seems to be

thinking chiefly of her "heroes and heroines," and would perhaps have admitted that the minor personages were less idealised. But we must suppose also that she failed to appreciate fully the singularity of characters which, in her seclusion, she had taken for average specimens of the world at large. If I take my village for the world, I cannot distinguish the particular from the universal; and must assume that the most distinctive peculiarities are unnoticeably commonplace. The amazing vividness of her portrait-painting is the quality which more than any other makes her work unique amongst modern fiction. Her realism is something peculiar to herself; and only the crudest of critics could depreciate its merits on the ground of its fidelity to facts. The hardest of all feats is to see what is before our eyes. What is called the creative power of genius is much more the power of insight into commonplace things and characters. The realism of the De Foe variety produces an illusion, by describing the most obvious aspects of everyday life, and introducing the irrelevant and accidental. A finer kind of realism is that which, like Miss Austen's, combines exquisite powers of minute perception with a skill which can light up the most delicate miniatures with an unfailing play of humour. A more impressive kind is that of

Balzac, where the most detailed reproduction of realities is used to give additional force to the social tragedies which are being enacted at our doors. The specific peculiarity of Miss Brontë seems to be the power of revealing to us the potentiality of intense passions lurking behind the scenery of everyday life. Except in the most melodramatic—which is also the weakest—part of "Jane Eyre," we have lives almost as uneventful as those of Miss Austen, and yet charged to the utmost with latent power. A parson at the head of a school-feast somehow shows himself as a "Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood;" a professor lecturing a governess on composition is revealed as a potential Napoleon; a mischievous schoolboy is obviously capable of developing into a Columbus or a Nelson; even the most commonplace natural objects, such as a row of beds in a dormitory, are associated, and naturally associated, with the most intense emotions. Miss Austen makes you feel that a tea-party in a country parsonage may be as amusing as the most brilliant meeting of cosmopolitan celebrities; and Miss Brontë that it may display characters capable of shaking empires and discovering new worlds. The whole machinery is in a state of the highest electric tension, though there is no display of thunder and lightning to amaze us.

The power of producing this effect without stepping one hand's-breadth beyond the most literal and unmistakable fidelity to ordinary facts is explicable, one would say, so far as genius is explicable at all, only in one way. A mind of extraordinary activity within a narrow sphere has been brooding constantly upon a small stock of materials, and a sensitive nature has been exposed to an unusual pressure from the hard facts of life. The surroundings must surely have been exceptional, and the receptive faculties impressible even to morbidness, to produce so startling a result; and the key seemed to be given by Mrs. Gaskell's touching biography, which, with certain minor faults, is still one of the most pathetic records of a melancholy life in our literature. Charlotte Brontë and her sister, according to this account, resembled the sensitive plant exposed to the cutting breezes of the West Riding moors. Their writings were the cry of pain and of only half-triumphant faith, produced by a life-long martyrdom, tempered by mutual sympathy, but embittered by family sorrows and the trials of a dependent life. They afforded one more exemplification of the common theory, that great art is produced by taking an exceptionally delicate nature and mangling it slowly under the grinding wheels of the world.

A recent biographer has given us to understand that

this is in great part a misconception, and, whilst paying high compliments to Mrs. Gaskell, he virtually accuses her of unintentionally substituting a fiction for a biography. Mr. Wemyss Reid's intention is excellent; and one can well believe that Mrs. Gaskell did in fact err by carrying into the earlier period the gloom of later years. Most certainly one would gladly believe this to be the case. Only when Mr. Reid seems to think that Charlotte Brontë was a gay and high-spirited girl, and that the people of Haworth were thoroughly commonplace, we begin to fear that we are in the presence of one of those well-meant attempts at whitewashing which "do justice" to a marked character by obliterating all its most prominent features. If Boswell had written in such a spirit, Johnson would have been a Chesterfield, and Goldsmith never have blundered in his talk. When we look at them fairly, Mr. Reid's proofs seem to be curiously inadequate for his conclusions, though calculated to correct some very important misconceptions. He quotes, for example, a couple of letters, in one of which Miss Brontë ends a little outburst of Tory politics by saying, "Now, Ellen, laugh heartily at all that rhodomontade!" This sentence, omitted by Mrs. Gaskell, is taken to prove that Charlotte's interest in politics was "not unmingled with the happy levity of youth." Surely, it is just a phrase from the school-girl's

"Complete Letter-Writer." It would be as sensible to quote from an orator the phrase, "but I fear that I am wearying the House," to prove that he was conscious of being an intolerable bore. The next letter is said to illustrate the "infinite variety of moods" of her true character, and its rapid transitions from grave to gay, because, whilst expressing very strongly some morbid feelings, she admits that they would be contemptible to common-sense, and says that she had been "in one of her sentimental humours." Did anybody ever express a morbid feeling without some such qualification? And is not "infinite," even in the least mathematical sense, rather a strong expression for two? A sentimental mood and a reaction are mentioned in one letter. That scarcely proves much gaiety of heart or variety of mood. If, indeed, Charlotte had always been at her worst, she would have been mad: and we need not doubt that she too had some taste of the gladness as of the sorrows of childhood. The plain truth is, that Miss Brontë's letters, read without reference to the disputes of rival biographers, are disappointing. The most striking thing about them is that they are young-ladyish. Here and there a passage revealing the writer's literary power shines through the more commonplace matter, but, as a whole, they give a curious impression of immaturity. The explanation

seems to be, in the first place, that Miss Brontë, with all her genius, was still a young lady. Her mind, with its exceptional powers in certain directions, never broke the fetters by which the parson's daughter of the last generation was restricted. Trifling indications of this are common in her novels. The idealised portrait of Emily, the daring and unconventional Shirley, shows her utmost courage by hinting a slight reluctance to repeat certain clauses in the Athanasian Creed; and the energy with which the unlucky curates are satirised shows the state of mind to which even the youngest clergyman is still invested with more or less superhuman attributes. The warmth is generated by the previous assumption that a young gentleman who dons a white neckcloth must, in the normal state of things, put off the schoolboy and develop a hidden pair of wings. The wrath excited by their failure to fulfil this expectation strikes one as oddly disproportionate. And, in the next place, it seems that, even in writing to her best friends, Miss Brontë habitually dreaded any vivid expression of feeling, and perhaps observed that her sentiments when spread upon letter-paper had a morbid appearance. There are many people who can confide in the public more freely than in the most intimate friends. The mask of anonymous authorship and fictitious personages has a delusive appearance of

security. The most sacred emotions are for ourselves or for the invisible public rather than for the intermediate sphere of concrete spectators. The letters may dissipate some of Mrs. Gaskell's romantic gloom, but they do not persuade us that the Brontës were ever like their neighbours. The doctrine that the people of Haworth were really commonplace mortals, may be accepted with a similar reserve. Undoubtedly every Scotch peasant is not a Davie Deans, nor every Irishman a Captain Costigan. There are natives of the mining districts who do not throw half-bricks at every stranger they see; there are Yankees who do not chew tobacco, and Englishmen who do not eat raw beefsteaks. And so one may well believe that many inhabitants of Haworth would have passed muster at Charing Cross; and one may hope and believe that a man like Heathcliff was an exaggeration even of the most extravagant of the squires in Craven. If there were many such people in any corner of this world, it would be greatly in want of a thorough clearing out. And, therefore, one may understand why the good people of Haworth should be amazed when Mrs. Gaskell set forth as common types the gentleman who fired small-shot from his parlour window at any one who came within convenient range, and the man who chuckled over his luck at dying just after insuring his life.

But, for all this, it would be permissible also to suppose that there was a strongly-marked provincial character in that region, even if Miss Brontë's lifelike portraits were not their own sufficient evidence. All people seem to be commonplace to the commonplace observer. Genius reveals the difference; it does not invent it. In one sense, doubtless, the people were commonplace enough, and in that fact lay part of their offensiveness. Many of the upper classes, one may guess, were hard, crabbed men of business, with even less than the average of English toleration for sentiment or æsthetic fancies; and their inferiors were sturdy workmen, capable of taking a pride in their own brutality, which would have shocked gentler races. But the precise degree in which these characteristics were manifested must be left to the decision of local observers. We cannot affect to know accurately in what proportion the charge of originality is to be shared between the Brontës and their neighbours; how far the surroundings were unusually harsh and the surrounded abnormally tender. In any case, one may assume that Miss Brontë and her sisters were at once even morbidly sensitive and exposed to the contact of persons emphatically intolerant of morbid sentiment. Their ordinary relation to the outside world seems to be indicated by one peculiarity of Miss Brontë's writing.

When young Mark Yorke sees that Moore has been flattered by hearing a lady describe him as "not sentimental," that offensive lad gets down a dictionary and endeavours to dash Moore's pleasure by proving that "not sentimental" must mean destitute of ideas. The trait is very probably from life, and is at any rate lifelike. There are many amiable people who take a keen pleasure in dashing cold water upon any little manifestation of self-complacency in their neighbours. To find out a man's tenderest corn, and then to bring your heel down upon it with a good rasping scrunch, is somehow gratifying to corrupt human nature. A kindly wit contrives to convey a compliment in affected satire. But the whole aim of a humourist of this variety is to convey the most mortifying truths in the most brutal plain-speaking. Now speeches modelled upon this plan are curiously frequent in Miss Brontë's conversations. Hunsden, the first sketch of the Yorke type in the "Professor," composes his whole talk of a string of brutal home-truths. The worst characters, like Miss Fanshawe in "Villette," thoroughly enjoy telling a friendless governess that she is poor, plain, and sickly. And even her favourites, Rochester and Shirley and Paul Emanuel, have just a leaning to the same trick of speech, though with them it is an occasional bitter to heighten the flavour of their substantial kind-

ness. Miss Brontë has as little sense of humour as Milton or Wordsworth; but her nearest approach to it is in some of those shrewd, bitter sayings which are rather more of a gibe than a compliment. When one remembers that the originals of the Yorkes were amongst her most cherished and cultivated friends, and that they are admittedly painted to the life, one may fancy that she had received a good many of those left-handed compliments which seem to have done duty for pleasant jests in the district.

The soliloquies in which her heroines indulge proceed upon the same plan. Jane Eyre sits in judgment upon herself, and listens to the evidence of Memory and Reason, accusing her of rejecting the real and "rabidly devouring the ideal." And she decides in accordance with her witnesses. "Listen, Jane Eyre, to your sentence; to-morrow place the glass before you and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully, without softening one defect; omit no harsh line; smooth away no displeasing irregularity: write under it, 'Portrait of a governess, disconnected, poor, and plain!'"

Similar passages occur in "Shirley" and "Villette," and obviously represent a familiar mood. The original of this portrait was frequently engaged, it would seem, in forcing herself to hear such unpalatable truths. When other people snubbed her, after the fashion of the

Yorkes, she might be vexed by their harshness, but her own thoughts echoed their opinion. Lucy Snowe is rather gratified than otherwise when Miss Fanshawe treats her to one of these pleasing fits of frank thinking aloud. She pardons the want of feeling for the sake of the honesty.

Sensitive natures brought into contact with those of coarser grain may relieve themselves in various ways. Some might have been driven into revolt against the proprieties which found so harsh an expression. Poor Branwell Brontë took the unluckily commonplace path of escape from a too frigid code of external morality which leads to the public-house. His sisters followed the more characteristically feminine method. They learnt to be proud of the fetters by which they were bound. Instead of fretting against the stern law of repression, they identified it with the eternal code of duty, and rejoiced in trampling on their own weakness. The current thus restrained ran all the more powerfully in its narrow channel. What might have been bright and genial sentiment was transformed and chastened into a kind of austere enthusiasm. They became recluses in spirit, sternly enforcing a self-imposed rule, though, in their case, the convent walls were invisible and the objects of their devotion not those which dominate the ascetic imagination.

Theorists who trace the inheritance of race-characteristics might be interested in the curious development thus effected. The father of the family was an Irishman, and the mother a Cornish woman; the aunt, who succeeded her in the management of the household, had a persistent dislike for the character of her northern neighbours; even Charlotte herself, we are told, spake in her childhood with a strong Irish accent. And yet, as we find her saying in reference to the troubles of 1848, she has "no sympathy" with French or Irish. She had been spiritually annexed by the people with whom she lived. She was obtrusively and emphatically a Yorkshire woman, though only by adoption; she is never tired of proclaiming or implying her hearty preference of rough Yorkshire people to cockneys, sentimentalists, and that large part of the human race which we describe contemptuously as "foreigners." She is a typical example of the "patriotism of the steeple." She loved with her whole heart the narrowest insular type. She idolised the Duke of Wellington, with his grand contempt for humbug and ideas, terms synonymous—perhaps rightly synonymous—with many people. When she came in contact with fine foreigners and Papists, it only increased her hearty contempt for forms of character and religion which, one might have fancied *à priori*, would have had many attractions for her. If at

times she felt the æsthetic charm of parts of the Catholic system, she was but the more convinced that it was a poison, dangerous in proportion to its sweetness. The habit of trampling on some of her own impulses had become a religion for her. She had learnt to make a shield of reserve and self-repression, and could not be tempted to lay it aside when gentle persuasion took the place of rougher intimidation. Much is said by her biographers of the heroic force of will of her sister Emily, who presents the same type in an intensified form. Undoubtedly both sisters had powerful wills; but their natures had not less been moulded, and their characters, so to speak, turned inward by the early influence of surrounding circumstances. The force was not of that kind which resists the pressure from without, but of the kind which accepts and intensifies it, and makes a rigid inward law for itself of the law embodied in external conditions.

The sisters, indeed, differed widely, though with a strong resemblance. The iron had not entered so deeply into Charlotte's nature. Emily's naturally subjective mode of thought—to use the unpleasant technical phrase—found its most appropriate utterance in lyrical poetry. She represents, that is, the mood of pure passion, and is rather encumbered than otherwise by the necessity of using the more indirect method of

concrete symbols. She feels, rather than observes; whereas Charlotte feels in observing. Charlotte had not that strange self-concentration which made the external world unreal to her sister. Her powers of observation, though restricted by circumstances and narrowed by limitations of her intellect, showed amazing penetration within her proper province. The greatest of all her triumphs in this direction is the character of Paul Emanuel, which has tasked Mr. Swinburne's powers of expressing admiration, and which one feels to be, in its way, inimitable. A more charming hero was never drawn, or one whose reality is more vivid and unmistakable. We know him as we know a familiar friend, or rather as we should know a friend whose character had been explained for us by a common acquaintance of unusual acuteness and opportunity of observation. Perhaps we might venture to add, that it is hardly explicable, except as a portrait drawn by a skilful hand guided by love, and by love intensified by the consciousness of some impassable barrier.

Mr. Swinburne compares this masterpiece of Miss Brontë's art with the famous heroes of fiction, Don Quixote, Uncle Toby, and Colonel Newcome. Don Quixote admittedly stands apart as one of the greatest creations of poetic imagination. Of Colonel Newcome I will not speak; but the comparison with Uncle Toby

is enough to suggest what is the great secret both of Miss Brontë's success and its limitations. In one sense Paul Emanuel is superior even to such characters as these. He is more real: he is so real that we feel at once that he must have been drawn from a living model, though we may leave some indefinable margin of idealisation. If the merit of fiction were simply its approach to producing illusion, we might infer that Paul Emanuel was one of the first characters in the world of fiction. But such a test admittedly implies an erroneous theory of art; and, in fact, the intense individuality of Paul Emanuel is, in a different sense, the most serious objection to him. He is a real human being who gave lectures at a particular date in a *pension* at Brussels. We are as much convinced of that fact as we are of the reality of Miss Brontë herself; but the fact is also a presumption that he is not one of those great typical characters, the creation of which is the highest triumph of the dramatist or novelist. There is too much of the temporary and accidental—too little of the permanent and essential.

We all know and love Uncle Toby, but we feel quite sure that no such man ever existed except in Sterne's brain. There may have been some real being who vaguely suggested him; but he is, we assume, the creation of Sterne, and the projection into concrete

form of certain ideas which had affected Sterne's imagination. He is not, indeed, nor is any fictitious character, a creation out of nothing. Partly, no doubt, he is Sterne himself, or Sterne in a particular mood; but Uncle Toby's soul, that which makes him live and excite our sympathy and love, is something which might be expressed by the philosopher as a theory, and which has been expressed in an outward symbol by an artist of extraordinary skill. Don Quixote is of perennial interest, because he is the most powerful type ever set forth of the contrast between the ideal and the commonplace, and his figure comes before us whenever we are forced to meditate upon some of the most vital and most melancholy truths about human life. Uncle Toby, in a less degree, is a great creation, because he is the embodiment of one answer to a profound and enduring problem. He represents, it has been said, the wisdom of love, as Mr. Shandy exemplifies the love of wisdom. More precisely, he is an incarnation of the sentimentalism of the eighteenth century. It is a phenomenon which has its bad and its good side, and which may be analysed and explained by historians of the time. Sterne, in describing Uncle Toby, gave a concrete symbol for one of the most important currents of thought of the time, which took religious, moral, and political, as well as artistic, shapes. In many ways

the sentiment has lost much of its interest for us; but though an utterance of an imperfect doctrine, we may infer that Uncle Toby's soul will transmigrate into new shapes, and perhaps develop into higher forms.

When we measure M. Paul Emanuel by this test, we feel instinctively that there is something wanting. The most obvious contrast is that M. Emanuel is no humourist himself, nor even a product of humour. The imperfections, the lovable absurdities, of Uncle Toby are imbedded in the structure of his character. His whims and oddities always leave us in the appropriate mood of blended smiles and tears. Many people, especially "earnest" young ladies, will prefer M. Paul Emanuel, who, like his creator, is always in deadly earnest. At bottom he is always (like all ladies' heroes) a true woman, simple, pure, heroic, and loving—a real Joan of Arc, as Mr. Thackeray said of his creator, in the beard and blouse of a French professor. He attaches extravagant importance to trifles, indeed, for his irascible and impetuous temperament is always converting him into an Æolus of the duck-pond. So far there is, we may admit, a kind of pseudo-humorous element in his composition; but the humour, such as it is, lies entirely on the surface. He is perfectly sane and sensible, though a trifle choleric. Give him a larger sphere of action, and his impetuosity will be imposing instead of

absurd. It is the mere accident of situation which gives, even for a moment, a ludicrous tinge to his proceedings.

Uncle Toby, on the contrary, would be even more of a humourist as a general on the battle-field than in his mimic sieges on the bowling-green. The humour is in his very marrow, not in his surroundings; and the reason is that Sterne feels what every genuine humourist feels, and what, indeed, it is his main function to express—a strong sense of the irony of fate, of the queer mixture of good and bad, of the heroic and the ludicrous, of this world of ours, and of what we may call the perversity of things in general. Whether such a treatment is altogether right and healthy is another question; and most certainly Sterne's view of life is in many respects not only unworthy, but positively base. But it remains true that the deep humourist is finding a voice for one of the most pervading and profound of the sentiments raised in a philosophical observer who is struck by the discords of the universe. Sensitiveness to such discords is one of the marks of a truly reflective intellect, though a humourist suggests one mode of escape from the pain which they cause, whilst a philosophic and religious mind may find another and perhaps a more profound solution.

Now M. Paul Emanuel, admirable and amiable as he

is, never carries us into the higher regions of thought. We are told, even ostentatiously, of the narrow prejudices which he shares, though they do not make him harsh and uncharitable. The prejudices were obvious in this case to the creator, because her own happened to be of a different kind. The "Tory and clergyman's daughter" was rather puzzled by finding that a bigoted Papist with a Jesuit education might still be a good man, and points out conscientiously the defects which she ascribes to his early training. But the mere fact of the narrowness, the want of familiarity with a wider sphere of thought, the acceptance of a narrow code of belief and morality, does not strike her as in itself having either a comic or a melancholy side. M. Paul has the wrong set of prejudices, but is not as wrong as prejudiced; and therefore we feel that a Sterne, or, say, a George Sand, whilst doing equal justice to M. Emanuel's excellent qualities, would have had a feeling (which in her was altogether wanting) of his limitation and his incongruity with the great system of the world. Seen from an intellectual point of view, placed in his due relation to the great currents of thought and feeling of the time, we should have been made to feel the pathetic and humorous aspects of M. Emanuel's character, and he might have been equally a living individual and yet a type of some more general

idea. The philosopher might ask, for example, what is the exact value of unselfish heroism guided by narrow theories or employed on unworthy tasks; and the philosophic humourist or artist might embody the answer in a portrait of M. Emanuel considered from a cosmic or a cosmopolitan point of view. From the lower standpoint accessible to Miss Brontë he is still most attractive; but we see only his relations to the little scholastic circle, and have no such perception as the greatest writers would give us of his relations to the universe, or, as the next order would give, of his relations to the great world without.

Although the secret of Miss Brontë's power lies, to a great extent, in the singular force with which she can reproduce acute observations of character from without, her most esoteric teaching, the most accurate reflex from her familiar idiosyncrasy, is of course to be found in the characters painted from within. We may infer her personality more or less accurately from the mode in which she contemplates her neighbours, but it is directly manifested in various avatars of her own spirit. Among the characters who are more or less mouthpieces of her peculiar sentiment we may reckon not only Lucy Snowe and Jane Eyre, but, to some extent, Shirley, and, even more decidedly, Rochester. When they speak we are really listening

to her own voice, though it is more or less disguised in conformity to dramatic necessity. There are great differences between them; but they are such differences as would exist between members of the same family, or might be explained by change of health or internal circumstances. Jane Eyre has not had such bitter experience as Lucy Snowe; Shirley is generally Jane Eyre in high spirits, and freed from harassing anxiety; and Rochester is really a spirited sister of Shirley's, though he does his very best to be a man, and even an unusually masculine specimen of his sex.

Mr. Rochester, indeed, has imposed upon a good many people; and he is probably responsible in part for some of the muscular heroes who have appeared since his time in the world of fiction. I must, however, admit that, in spite of some opposing authority, he does not appear to me to be a real character at all, except as a reflection of a certain side of his creator. He is in reality the personification of a true woman's longing (may one say it now?) for a strong master. But the knowledge is wanting. He is a very bold but necessarily unsuccessful attempt at an impossibility. The parson's daughter did not really know anything about the class of which he is supposed to be a type, and he remains vague and inconsistent in spite of all his vigour. 'He is intended to

be a person who has surfeited from the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and addresses the inexperienced governess from the height—or depth—of his worldly wisdom. And he really knows just as little of the world as she does. He has to impose upon her by giving an account of his adventures taken from the first novel at hand of the early Bulwer school, or a diluted recollection of Byron. There is not a trace of real cynicism—of the strong nature turned sour by experience—in his whole conversation. He is supposed to be specially simple and masculine, and yet he is as self-conscious as a young lady on her first appearance in society, and can do nothing but discourse about his feelings, and his looks, and his phrenological symptoms, to his admiring hearer. Set him beside any man's character of a man, and one feels at once that he has no real solidity or vitality in him. He has, of course, strong nerves and muscles, but those are articles which can be supplied in unlimited quantities with little expense to the imagination. Nor can one deny that his conduct to Miss Eyre is abominable. If he had proposed to her to ignore the existence of the mad Mrs. Rochester, he would have acted like a rake, but not like a sneak. But the attempt to entrap Jane into a bigamous connection by concealing the wife's existence, is a piece of treachery for which it is

hard to forgive him. When he challenges the lawyer and the clergyman to condemn him after putting themselves in his place, their answer is surely obvious. One may take a lenient view of a man who chooses by his own will to annul his marriage to a filthy lunatic; but he was a knave for trying to entrap a defenceless girl by a mock ceremony. He puts himself in a position in which the contemptible Mr. Mason has a moral advantage.

This is by far the worst blot in Miss Brontë's work, and may partly explain, though it cannot justify, the harsh criticisms made at the time. It is easy now to win a cheap reputation for generosity by trampling upon the dead bodies of the luckless critics who blundered so hopelessly. The time for anger is past; and mere oblivion is the fittest doom for such offenders. Inexperience, and consequently inadequate appreciation of the demands of the situation, was Miss Brontë's chief fault in this matter, and most certainly not any want of true purity and moral elevation. But the fact that she, in whom an instinctive nobility of spirit is, perhaps, the most marked characteristic, should have given scandal to the respectable, is suggestive of another inference. What, in fact, is the true significance of this singular strain of thought and feeling, which puts on various and yet closely-allied forms in

the three remarkable novels we have been considering? It displays itself at one moment in some vivid description, or—for "description" seems too faint a word—some forcible presentation to our mind's eye of a fragment of moorland scenery; at another, it appears as an ardently sympathetic portrayal of some trait of character at once vigorous and tender; then it utters itself in a passionate soliloquy, which establishes the fact that its author possessed the proverbial claim to knowledge of the heavenly powers; or again, it produces one of those singular little prose-poems—such as Shirley's description of Eve—which, with all their force, have just enough flavour of the "devoirs" at M. Heger's establishment to suggest that they are the work of an inspired school-girl. To gather up into a single formula the meaning of such a character as Lucy Snowe, or, in other words, of Charlotte Brontë, is, of course, impossible. But at least such utterances always give us the impression of a fiery soul imprisoned in too narrow and too frail a tenement. The fire is pure and intense. It is kindled in a nature intensely emotional, and yet aided by a heroic sense of duty. The imprisonment is not merely that of a feeble body in uncongenial regions, but that of a narrow circle of thought, and consequently of a mind which has never worked itself clear by reflection, or developed a har-

monious and consistent view of life. There is a certain feverish disquiet which is marked by the peculiar mannerism of the style. At its best, we have admirable flashes of vivid expression, where the material of language is the incarnation of keen intuitive thought. At its worst, it is strangely contorted, crowded by rather awkward personifications, and degenerates towards a rather unpleasant Ossianesque. More severity of taste would increase the power by restraining the abuse. We feel an aspiration after more than can be accomplished, an unsatisfied yearning for potent excitement, which is sometimes more fretful than forcible.

The symptoms are significant of the pervading flaw in otherwise most effective workmanship. They imply what, in a scientific sense, would be an inconsistent theory, and, in an æsthetic sense, an inharmonious representation of life. One great aim of the writing, explained in the preface to the second edition of "Jane Eyre," is a protest against conventionality. But the protest is combined with a most unflinching adherence to the proper conventions of society; and we are left in great doubt as to where the line ought to be drawn. Where does the unlawful pressure of society upon the individual begin, and what are the demands which it may rightfully make upon our respect? At one moment in "Jane Eyre" we seem to be drifting

towards the solution that strong passion is the one really good thing in the world, and that all human conventions which oppose it should be disregarded. This was the tendency which shocked the respectable reviewers of the time. Of course they should have seen that the strongest sympathy of the author goes with the heroic self-conquest of the heroine under temptation. She triumphs at the cost of a determined self-sacrifice, and undoubtedly we are meant to sympathise with the martyr. Yet it is also true that we are left with the sense of an unsolved discord. Sheer stoical regard for duty is represented as something repulsive, however imposing, in the figure of St. John Rivers, and virtue is rewarded by the arbitrary removal of the obstacles which made it unpleasant. What would Jane Eyre have done, and what would our sympathies have been, had she found that Mrs. Rochester had not been burnt in the fire at Thornfield? That is rather an awkward question. Duty is supreme, seems to be the moral of the story; but duty sometimes involves a strain almost too hard for mortal faculties.

If in the conflict between duty and passion the good so often borders upon the impracticable, the greatest blessing in the world should be a will powerful enough to be an inflexible law for itself under all pressure of circumstances. Even a will directed to evil purposes

has a kind of royal prerogative, and we may rightly do it homage. That seems to be the seminal thought in "Wuthering Heights," that strange book to which we can hardly find a parallel in our literature, unless in such works as the "Revenger's Tragedy," and some other crude but startling productions of the Elizabethan dramatists. But Emily Brontë's feeble grasp of external facts makes her book a kind of baseless nightmare, which we read with wonder and with distressing curiosity, but with far more pain than pleasure or profit. Charlotte's mode of conceiving the problem is given most fully in "Villette," the book of which one can hardly say, with a recent critic, that it represents her "ripest wisdom," but which seems to give her best solution of the great problem of life. Wisdom, in fact, is not the word to apply to a state of mind which seems to be radically inconsistent and tentative. The spontaneous and intense affection of kindred and noble natures is the one really precious thing in life, it seems to say; and, so far, the thought is true, or a partial aspect of the truth; and the high feeling undeniable. But then, the author seems to add, such happiness is all but chimerical. It falls to the lot only of a few exceptional people, upon whom fortune or Providence has delighted to shower its gifts. To all others life is either a wretched grovelling business, an affair of

making money and gratifying sensuality, or else it is a prolonged martyrdom. Yield to your feelings, and the chances are enormously great that you are trampled upon by the selfish, or that you come into collision with some of those conventions which must be venerated, for they are the only barriers against moral degradation, and which yet somehow seem to make in favour of the cruel and the self-seeking. The only safe plan is that of the lady in the ballad, to "lock your heart in a case of gold, and pin it with a silver pin." Mortify your affections, scourge yourself with rods, and sit in sackcloth and ashes; stamp vigorously upon the cruel thorns that strew your pathway, and learn not to shrink when they lacérate the most tender flesh. Be an ascetic, in brief, and yet without the true aim of the ascetic. For, unlike him, you must admit that these affections are precisely the best part of you, and that the offers of the Church, which proposes to wean you from the world and reward you by a loftier prize, are a delusion and a snare. They are the lessons of a designing priesthood, and imply a blasphemy against the most divine instincts of human nature.

This is the unhappy discord which runs through Miss Brontë's conceptions of life, and whilst it gives an indescribable pathos to many pages, leaves us with a sense of something morbid and unsatisfactory. She

seems to be turning for relief alternately to different teachers, to the promptings of her own heart, to the precepts of those whom she has been taught to revere, and occasionally, though timidly and tentatively, to alien schools of thought. The attitude of mind is, indeed, best indicated by the story (a true story, like most of her incidents) of her visit to the confessional in Brussels. Had she been a Catholic, or a Positivist, or a rebel against all the creeds, she might have reached some consistency of doctrine, and therefore some harmony of design. As it is, she seems to be under a desire which makes her restless and unhappy, because her best impulses are continually warring against each other. She is between the opposite poles of duty and happiness, and cannot see how to reconcile their claims, or even—for perhaps no one can solve that or any other great problem exhaustively—how distinctly to state the question at issue. She pursues one path energetically, till she feels herself to be in danger, and then shrinks with a kind of instinctive dread, and resolves not only that life is a mystery, but that happiness must be sought by courting misery. Undoubtedly such a position speaks of a mind diseased, and a more powerful intellect would even under her conditions have worked out some more comprehensible and harmonious solution.

For us, however, it is allowable to interpret her complaints in our own fashion, whatever it may be. We may give our own answer to the dark problem, or at least indicate the path by which an answer must be reached. For a poor soul so grievously beset within and without by troubles in which we all have a share, we can but feel the strongest sympathy. We cannot sit at her feet as a great teacher, nor admit that her view of life is satisfactory, or even intelligible. But we feel for her as for a fellow-sufferer who has at least felt with extraordinary keenness the sorrows and disappointments which torture most cruelly the most noble virtues, and has clung throughout her troubles to beliefs which must in some form or other be the guiding lights of all worthy actions. She is not in the highest rank amongst those who have fought their way to a clearer atmosphere, and can help us to clearer conceptions; but she is amongst the first of those who have felt the necessity of consolation, and therefore stimulated to more successful efforts.

IX.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

THE recently-published Memorials of the late Canon Kingsley do not constitute a biography of the normal type. In other words, the book does not profess to answer every question which the curiosity of readers might suggest; and, on the whole, one may be very glad that it does not. To many such questions the most appropriate answer is silence, not unmixed with contempt. To others, which may be taken as the expression of a legitimate interest in an eminent man, a reader of moderate intelligence may be trusted to find a sufficient answer in the ample materials placed before him. There is no great difficulty in seizing the main outlines of so strongly marked a character; and, on the whole, Mr Kingsley well deserves the labour. Few writers of his generation gave clearer indications of power. Had he died at the age of five-and-thirty (when "Westward Ho!" was already completed), we should have speculated upon the great things which we had lost. The last

twenty years of his life added little or nothing to his literary reputation. Perhaps, indeed, some of his performances—the lectures at Cambridge, and the unfortunate controversy with Dr. Newman—reflected a certain discredit upon his previous achievements. The explanation is not far to seek, when one has read the story of his life; but the fact makes it rather difficult to recall the feelings with which the rising generation of the years between 1848 and 1855 regarded the most vigorous champion of a school then in its highest vigour. The "Saint's Tragedy," "Yeast," "Alton Locke," "Hypatia," and "Westward Ho!" did not exactly reveal one of the born leaders of mankind; but their freshness, geniality, and vigour seemed to indicate powers which might qualify their possessor to be an admirable interpreter between the original prophets and the inferior disciples. There was the buoyancy of spirit, the undoubting confidence that the riddle of the universe had at last been satisfactorily solved, and the power of seizing the picturesque and striking aspects of things and embodying abstract theories in vivid symbols which marks the second order of intellects—the men who spread but do not originate fruitful and transforming ideas. Thinkers of the highest rank may be equally self-confident: for it cannot be denied that unreasonable trust in one's own infallibility is a great condition of success in even the

highest tasks; but the confidence of great minds is compatible with a deeper estimate of the difficulties before them. They may hold that evil will be extirpated, but they are aware that its roots strike down into the very heart of things. Kingsley's exuberant faith in his own message showed the high spirits of youth rather than a profound insight into the conditions of the great problems which he solved so fluently. At the time, however, this youthful zeal was contagious. If not an authority to obey, he was a fellow-worker in whom to trust heartily and rejoice unreservedly. Nobody, as Mr. Matthew Arnold says in a letter published in these volumes, was more willing to admire or more free from petty jealousies. This quality gave a charm to his writings. There was always something generous in their tone; a desire to understand his antagonist's position, which was due to his own temperament as much as to the teaching of his leader, Mr. Maurice; and, in short, a warmth and heartiness which led one to overlook many defects, and rightly attracted the enthusiasm of men young enough to look up to him for guidance.

The earlier pages in Mrs. Kingsley's volumes give a vivid picture of this period of his life, or, at least, of one side of it. Something is said—as of course it is proper to say something—of the speculative doubts and difficulties through which he won his way to a more settled

and happier frame of mind. But it is impossible to take this very seriously. Kingsley, as his letters prove, started in life, like other lads, with a ready-made theory of the universe. Like other lads, he was perfectly confident that it rested upon an unassailable basis and would solve all difficulties. He intended, it is true, to perfect himself in a few branches of study which he had hitherto neglected; he was to learn something about metaphysics, theology, ecclesiastical history, and other branches of knowledge; but it is quite plain that Kant and Augustine and other great teachers of mankind were to be called in, not to consult upon the basis of his philosophy, but to furnish him with a few tools for polishing certain corollaries and increasing his dialectical skill. He is quite ready to provide his correspondents immediately with a definitive philosophical system, and shows his usual versatility in applying at least some of the metaphysical phraseology caught from his intellectual idols. Many lads, however, learn to modify the speculative apparatus with which they started. Absolute conversions, it is true, are almost unknown in philosophy. No one ever deserts from the empirical to the *à priori* school, or *vice versâ;* for a man's attitude in such matters depends upon intellectual tendencies which assert themselves in early youth as much as in riper years. But men of real power go through a pro-

cess of development, which, though it leaves a certain homogeneity between their earlier and their later views, softens the crudeness and lessens the superficiality of the first guesses. No such process is traceable in Kingsley. His first theory is his last, except that in later years his interest in abstract speculation had obviously declined, and his declarations, if equally dogmatic in form, show less confidence than desire to be confident. He is glad to turn from speculations to facts, and thinks that his strength lies in the direction rather of the natural sciences than of speculative thought.

Probably he was quite right. It would, at any rate, be a mistake to regard any process of intellectual development as determining his career. He was no real philosopher, though capable of providing philosophical dialogues quite good enough to figure in an historical novel. He was primarily a poet, or, at least, a man swayed by the imagination and emotions. He felt keenly, saw vividly, and accepted such abstract teachings as were most congenial to his modes of seeing and feeling. The true key to his mental development must therefore be sought in his emotional history, and not in the intellectual fermentation which determines the career of a true thinker. The story of his life in this

aspect, though indicated rather than directly told, seems to be simple enough. Few people, it is probable, possess greater faculties of enjoyment than Kingsley. His delight in a fine landscape resembled the delight of an epicure in an exquisite vintage. It had the intensity and absorbing power of a sensual appetite. He enjoyed the sight of the Atlantic rollers relieved against a purple stretch of heather as the conventional alderman enjoys turtle-soup. He gave himself up to the pure emotion as a luxuriant nature abandons itself to physical gratification. His was not the contemplative mood of the greater poets of nature, but an intense spasm of sympathy which rather excluded all further reflection. Such a temperament implies equal powers of appreciation for many other kinds of beauty, though his love of fine scenery has perhaps left the strongest mark upon his books. He was abnormally sensitive to those pleasures which are on the border-line between the sensuous and the intellectual. He speaks in an early letter of the "dreamy days of boyhood," when his "enjoyment was drawn from the semi-sensual delights of ear and eye, from sun and stars, wood and wave, the beautiful inanimate in all its forms." "Present enjoyment," he adds, "present profit, brought always to me a recklessness of moral consequences which has been my bane." The

last expression must of course be taken for what it is worth—that is, for next to nothing: but he is no doubt right in attributing to himself a certain greediness of pleasures of the class described, which became more intellectual and comprehensive but hardly less intense in later years.

It is needless to point out what are the dangers to which a man is exposed by such a temperament. He describes himself (at the age of twenty-two) as saved from "the darkling tempests of scepticism," and from "sensuality and dissipation;" saved, too, "from a hunter's life on the prairies, from becoming a savage and perhaps worse." The phrase savours of his habitual exaggeration, but it has a real meaning. Young men with a strong taste for pleasure are ruined often enough, though they do not go so far as "the prairies" to effect that consummation. We can see with sufficient clearness that during his college life Kingsley went through serious struggles and came out victorious. Partly, no doubt, he owed that victory over himself to the fact that his tastes, however keen, were not coarse. He had a genuine vein of poetry; that is to say, of really noble feeling. His intense delight in the higher forms of beauty was a force which resisted any easy lapse into degradation. The æsthetic faculties may, as has been

too clearly proved, fall into bondage to the lowest impulses of our nature. In the case of a man so open to generous and manly impulses, so appreciative of the charms which outward scenery reveals to healthy and tender minds, and to them alone, the struggle against such a bondage must have been in any case prolonged and vigorous. But stronger men than Kingsley have yielded, and one may see in him the type of character which, under other conditions, produces the "diabolical" or rather the animalistic school of art and literature. An external influence, we are left to infer, had a share in saving him from so lamentable a descent. Kingsley, in short, was rescued as other men have been rescued, by the elevating influence of a noble passion. It is inevitable that this fact, tolerably obvious as it is, should be rather indicated than stated in the biography. But he was not slow to proclaim in all his writings, and we need not scruple to assume that his utterance was drawn from his own experience, that, of all good things that can befall a man in this world, the best is that he should fall in love with a good woman. It is not a new truth; indeed, most truths of that importance have an uncomfortable habit of revealing themselves to the intrusive persons who have insisted upon saying all our best things before us. Still, true as it is, many young

men are apt to ignore it, or to consider it as repealed instead of limited by obvious prudential maxims. Kingsley, led to recognise it, and even to exaggerate its exclusive importance by his own history, insists upon it with an emphasis which may not only be traced through his writings, but which seems to have affected all his conceptions of life. It may almost be regarded as the true central point of his doctrine. The love of man for woman, when sanctified by religious feeling, is, according to him, the greatest of all forces that work for individual or social good. This belief, and the system of which it forms a part, give the most characteristic colouring to all his work. It appears to be decided by general consent that a novel means the same thing as a love-story. Some writers, indeed, have been bold enough to maintain, and even to act upon the opinion, that this view exaggerates the part played by the passion in actual life; and that men have some interests in life which survive the pairing period. Kingsley's doctrine differs from that of the ordinary novelist in another way. Love may not be the ultimate end of a man's life; but it is, as Shakespeare puts it—

> The ever-fixed mark
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
> It is the star to every wandering bark
> Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

It is the guide to a noble life; and not only affords the discipline by which men obtain the mastery over themselves, but reveals to them the true theory of their relations to the universe. This doctrine, treated in a rather vacillating manner, supplies the theme for his earliest book, the "Saint's Tragedy." Lancelot in "Yeast," and even the poor tailor, Alton Locke, owe their best stimulus towards obtaining a satisfactory solution of the perplexed social problems of the time to their love for good women. Hypatia, the type of the feminine influence whose lofty instincts are misdirected by a decaying philosophy, and poor Pelagia, with no philosophy at all, excite the passions by which monks, pagans, and Goths are elevated or corrupted; and the excellent Victoria—a lady who comes too distinctly from a modern tract—shows the philosopher Raphael how to escape from a despairing cynicism. The Elizabethan heroes of "Westward Ho!" take the side of good or evil according to their mode of understanding love for the heroines. In "Two Years Ago," the delicate curate, and the dandified American, and the sturdy Tom Thurnall, all manage to save their souls by the worship of a lofty feminine character, whilst poor Tom Briggs or Vavasour is ruined by his failure to appreciate the rare excellence of his wife. The same

thought inspires some of his most remarkable poems, as the truly beautiful Andromeda, and the "Martyrdom of Saint Maura," considered by himself to be his best, though I fancy that few readers will share this judgment. Lancelot in "Yeast" designs a great allegorical drawing called the "Triumph of Woman," which sets forth the hallowing influence of feminine charms upon every variety of human being. The picture is one of those which could hardly be put upon canvas; but it would be the proper frontispiece to Kingsley's works.

Such a doctrine, it may be said, is too specific and narrow to be considered as the animating principle of the various books in which it appears. This is doubtless true, and it must be taken rather as the most characteristic application of the teaching of which it is in a logical sense the corollary, though ostensible corollaries are often in fact first principles. When generalised or associated with congenial theories of wider application, it explains Kingsley's leading doctrines. Thus the love of good women is the great practical guide in life; and, in a broader sense, our affections are to guide our intellects. The love of nature, the rapture produced in a sensitive mind by the glorious beauties of the external world, is to teach us the true theory of the universe. The ultimate argument

which convinces men like Tom Thurnall and Raphael Aben Ezra, is that the love of which they have come to know the mysterious charm, must reveal the true archetype of the world, previously hidden by the veil of sense. It wants no more to explain a problem which seems[1] to have puzzled Kingsley himself—why, namely, the mystics should supply the only religious teaching which had "any real meaning for his heart." A man, who systematically sees the world through his affections is so far a mystic; though Kingsley's love of the concrete and incapacity for abstract metaphysics prevented him from using the true mystical language. Still simpler is the solution of another problem stated by his biographer. It is said to be "strange" that Kingsley should have acknowledged the intellectual leadership at once of Coleridge and Maurice and of Mr. Carlyle. The superficial difference between the two first and the last of those writers is indeed obvious. But it requires no profound reasoner to detect the fundamental similarity. They all agree in seeing facts through the medium of the imagination, and substituting poetic intuition for the slow and chilling processes of scientific reasoning. They agree in rejecting the rigid framework of dogma and desiring to exalt the spirit above the dead letter. To

[1] "Life," vol. i. p. 420.

Kingsley, as to his teachers, and to most imaginative minds, science seemed at one time to mean materialism in philosophy and cynicism in morals. Men of science subordinate the satisfaction of the emotions to the satisfaction of the intellect; they seek to analyse into their elements the concrete realities which alone interest the poet, and see mechanical laws where their opponents would recognise a living force. To Kingsley they appeared to be drying up the source of his most rapturous emotions, and reducing the beautiful world to a colourless museum of dead specimens. Instead of regulating they were suppressing the emotions. It is less remarkable that he should have opposed a doctrine thus interpreted, than that he should have gradually become less hostile to the scientific aspect of things. He accepted, instead of reviling, Mr. Darwin's teaching; and seems to have been convincing himself that, after all, science was not an enemy to the loftier sentiments. His keen eye for nature, his love of beast and bird and insect, made him sympathise with the observers, if not with the reasoners, and led him to recognise a poetic and a religious side in rightly interpreted science.

His antipathy to another kind of dogmatism is equally intelligible. To him it appeared (rightly or wrongly) to be hopelessly tainted by the evil principle

which he generally described as Manichæism. It ordered him (or so he supposed) to look upon nature with horror or suspicion, instead of regarding it as everywhere marked with the indelible impress of the creative hand, and therefore calculated to stimulate the highest emotions of reverence and awe; and, still more, it set up a false and attenuated ethical standard, which condemned all natural impulses as therefore bad, and placed the monkish above the domestic virtues. It was clearly inevitable that a man who regarded human love as the very centre and starting-point of all the good influences of life, and the delight in nature as the very test of a healthily-constituted mind, should look upon teaching thus understood with absolute detestation. Possibly he caricatured it; at any rate he spared no pains to attack it by every means open to him, and especially by setting forth his own ideal of character. He created the "muscular Christian"—the man, that is, who, on the showing of his antagonists, is an impossible combination of classical and Christian types, and, on his own, implies the harmonious blending of all aspects of the truth. He protested, fruitlessly enough, against the nickname, because it seemed to imply that his version of the character subordinated the highest to the lowest ele-

ments. It suggested that he had used Christian phraseology to consecrate a blind admiration for physical prowess and excess of animal vigour. His indignation—expressed in an imprudently angry letter to one of his critics—was intelligible enough. The imputation was cruel, because it was at once false and plausible. It was false, for Kingsley's ideal heroes—whether properly to be called Christians or not—are certainly not mere animals. They have their faults, but they are not sensual or cynical, though in some of their literary descendants the animal side of their nature seems to have developed itself with suspicious facility. Amyas Leigh would probably have hung his Guy Livingstone from a yard-arm before the voyage was over. To readers, however, looking at Amyas from a different point of view, the likeness might be deceptive; and in asserting the value of certain qualities too much depreciated by his critics, he naturally seemed to give them an excessive value.

A vague impression that Kingsley was somehow a potential defender of the faith—that he had seen through the doubts and difficulties which perplex other minds—counts for something in his popularity. It is quite needless to dispel this pleasant vision, if anybody holds it; but I shall venture to take it for granted

that it would be useless to look to him for any very profound statement of the grounds of belief. Doubtless he was what is called a sincere believer; but one cannot forget that all hagiologists are apt unconsciously to heighten the halo of religious unction which surrounded their heroes when alive. Kingsley did not carry so much of the pulpit frame of mind into ordinary life as innocent readers might fancy. Nobody would have been better pleased to follow jolly Bishop Corbet into his cellar and pitch away cassock and bands with "There goes the parson," and "There goes the bishop." He had not the dignified calm which stamps the caste of bores and philosophers; and, indeed, the impetuosity of temperament which disqualified him for such tasks, is but too perceptible in his artistic work. Its most obvious fault is a want of repose and harmony. He can never be quiet for a moment. Every sentence must be emphatic and intense. He seizes the first aspect of a subject; dashes out a picture—sometimes of perfectly admirable vigour—in half-a-dozen lines; but cannot dwell upon a particular strain of thought or tone down the brilliant hues of fragmentary passages by the diffused atmosphere of calm reflection. He could hardly sit quiet for a moment, as one of his admirers tells us; and his strong-minded heroes, who ought to be self-sus-

tained and tranquil, are always in as great a fever as himself. The result of this tendency is too plainly written upon his life as upon his books. He was always, in a sanitary sense, living upon his capital, and taking more out of his strength than his powers justified. He knocked himself up completely by writing "Yeast" before he was thirty, and every subsequent work seems to have involved an effort which told heavily upon his constitution. The natural consequence of such a process is to be seen in the fact already noticed that his literary productiveness rapidly declined; and that in his later works we have the emphasis which has become habitual, without the force which saved it from affectation. It must, however, be said to his credit that he had the merit—a tolerably rare one—of abandoning the attempt to rival his own earlier performances when the vein no longer flowed spontaneously.

The strength and the weakness of such a temperament are illustrated by his poetry, of which some fragments will probably survive (and few, indeed, are the poets who survive by more than fragments), though we may doubt the truth of his own opinion that they would supply his most lasting claim upon posterity. He explains, however, very frankly why he can never be a great poet. He is wanting, he says,[1] in the great

1 "Life," vol. ii. p. 55.

poetic faculty—the "power of metaphor and analogue —the instinctive vision of connections between all things in heaven and earth." His mind, in other words, was deficient in the direction of philosophic imagination. He could not, like Milton, converse habitually with—

> Him that yon soars on golden wing,
> Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
> The cherub Contemplation.

He was too restless and impetuous to be at ease on those heights from which alone the widest truths become perceptible and excite the emotions which are at once deepest and calmest. His songs represent jets and gushes of vivid but rather feverish emotion. A pathetic or heroic story, or the beauty of some natural scene, moves him deeply, and he utters his emotion in an energetic burst of vivid language. But he is too short-winged for a long flight, or for soaring into the loftiest regions of the intellectual atmosphere.

Every short lyric is the record, one must suppose, of some such mood of intense excitement. But it makes all the difference whether the excitement takes place in a mind already stored with thought, and ready to pierce instantaneously to the deepest meaning of a particular scene or incident, or in a mind incap-

able of sustained reflection, and accustomed to see things by brilliant flashes which reveal only their partial and superficial aspects. When, however, we do not blame Kingsley for not being somebody else, we must admit him to be excellent within his limits. The "Andromeda" is in every way admirable. It is probably the most successful attempt in the language to grapple with the technical difficulties of English hexameters; and he also seems to find in the Pagan mythology a more appropriate symbol for his characteristic tone of sentiment, and an imagery which fits in better with his nature-worship than in regions more familiar to him. He can abandon himself unreservedly to his delight in the beautiful without bothering himself about the Manichees or showing the controversial theologian under the artistic dress. The shorter poems have generally a power for stamping themselves upon the memory, due, no doubt, to their straightforward, nervous style. They have the cardinal merit of vigour which belongs to all genuine utterance of real emotion, and are delightfully free from the flabby affectations of many modern rivals. The mark may not be the most elevated, but he goes at it as straight as he would ride at a fence. His "North-Easter" does not blow from such ethereal regions as Shelley's "South-west Wind."

It verges upon the absurd, and is perhaps not quite free from that taint of vulgarity which vitiates all artistic reference to field-sports. But given that such a sentiment was worth expressing, the tones in which it is couched are as ringing and vigorous as could be wished. He can rise much higher when he is pathetic and indignant. It would not be easy to find a better war-cry for the denouncer of social wrongs than the ballad of the poacher's widow. And to pass over the two songs by which he is best known, such poems as "Poor Lorraine"—first published in the biography—or the beautiful lines in the "Saint's Tragedy," beginning, "Oh, that we two were maying!" are intense enough in their utterance to make us wonder why he fell short of the highest class of song-writing. Perhaps the defect is indicated by a certain desire to be picturesque, which prevents him from obtaining complete success in the simple expression of pathos. The poems have a taint of prettiness—and prettiness is a deadly vice in poetry. There is about them a faint flavour of drawing-room music. But, when we do not want to be hypercritical, we may be thankful for poetry which, if not of the highest class, has the rarest of merits at the present day—genuine fervour and originality.

The fullest expression of Kingsley's mind must be

found in the works which appeared from 1848 to 1855. Those seven years, one may say, saw his literary rise, culmination, and decline. The "Saint's Tragedy" represents the period of mental agitation. It will hardly live longer than many other modern attempts by men of equal genius to compose dramas not intended for the stage. The form in such cases is generally felt to be an encumbrance rather than a help, and one cannot help thinking in this instance that Kingsley might have done better if he had written a picturesque history instead of forcing his story into an uncongenial framework. Nobody is now likely to share Bunsen's belief that the author had proved himself capable of continuing Shakespeare's great series of historic dramas. But one is also rather surprised that a performance which, with all its crudities and awkwardness, showed such unmistakable symptoms of power, did not make a greater impression. Perhaps the most vital fault is the want of unity, not merely in plot but in the leading thought, which was the natural result of the mode of composition. He began it in 1842—that is, at the age of twenty-three, and it was not published till 1848. As this includes the period during which Kingsley passed through his acutest struggle, it is not wonderful that the book should show signs of confusion. It has, indeed, a purpose, and a very distinct one. It is the first exposi-

tion of that doctrine which, as I have said, Kingsley preached in season and out of season. He wishes to exhibit the beauty of his own ideal of feminine meekness as compared with the monastic and ascetic ideal. It cannot, I think, be denied that this central idea was capable of artistic treatment. A dramatist might surely find an impressive motive in the conflict set up in a mind of purity and elevation by the acceptance of a distorted code of morality. There is a genuine tragic element in this interpretation of poor Elizabeth's sufferings. Nature tells her that her domestic affections are holy and of divine origin; the priests tell her that they are to be crushed and mortified. She is gradually tortured to death by the distraction of attempting to obey the two voices, each of them appealing to the loftiest and most unselfish motives. The history is probably false, but the conception is not the less powerful. The execution remains unsatisfactory, chiefly for the obvious reason that Kingsley was not quite a Shakespeare nor even a Schiller, and that his work is therefore rather a series of vigorous sketches than an effective whole; but partly also because his own sentiment seems to be vacillating and indistinct. A thorough hater or a thorough adherent of the theories impugned would have made a work more artistically telling because more coherently conceived. Kingsley is

really feeling his way to a theory, and therefore undecided in his artistic attitude. The whole becomes patchy and indistinct. He is feverishly excited rather than deeply moved, and inconsistent when he ought to be compassionate. Briefly, he wants firmness of hand and definiteness of purpose, though there is no want of spasmodic vigour.

The two novels, "Yeast" and "Alton Locke," are far more effective; and indeed "Alton Locke" may be fairly regarded as his best piece of work. It is not creditable to the discernment of the intelligent public that Kingsley should have been taken for a subversive revolutionist on the strength of these performances. The intelligent public indeed is much given to the grossest stupidity; and as Kingsley more or less deceived himself, it is not wonderful that he should have been misunderstood. He announced himself at a public meeting to be a Chartist; and when a man voluntarily adopts a nickname, he must not be surprised if he is credited with all the qualities generally associated with it. In fact, however, he was not more of a genuine Radical than when in later years he declared that he would, if he could, "restore the feudal system, the highest form of civilisation—*in ideal, not in practice*—which Europe has yet seen."[1] There is much virtue

[1] "Life," vol. ii. p. 357.

in the phrase "not in practice;" and perhaps Kingsley was no more of a genuine feudalist than he was of a genuine Chartist. In his earlier phase he was simply playing a part which has often enough been attempted by very honest men. Missionaries of a new faith see the advantage of sapping the old creed instead of attacking it in front. Adopting its language and such of its tenets as are congenial to their own, they can gradually introduce a friendly garrison into the hostile fort. The conscious adoption of such a method might have been called jesuitical by Kingsley, and in his mouth such an epithet would have been damnatory. But it was in all sincerity that he and his friends considered themselves to be the "true demagogues"—to quote the title of the chapter in which the moral of "Alton Locke" is embodied. They had not the slightest sympathy, indeed, with the tenets of the thoroughgoing Radical. Kingsley believed in the social as much as in the ecclesiastical hierarchy; and with an intensity which almost amounted to bigotry. He would no more put down the squires than the parson; and himself a most energetic parson, he certainly did not undervalue the social importance of the function discharged by his order. In "Alton Locke" the bitterest satire is directed, not against self-indulgent nobles or pedantic prelates, but against the accepted leaders of the artisans.

The "true demagogue," as is perfectly natural, holds the false demagogue in especial horror. Kingsley is the friend, not Cuffey. He hates the "Manchester school" as the commonplace version of Radicalism and the analogue of the Materialist school in politics. From these, he says,[1] in 1852, "heaven defend us; for of all narrow, conceited, hypocritical, and anarchic and atheistic schemes of the universe, the Manchester one is precisely the worst. I have no words to express my contempt for it." Briefly, Kingsley's remedy for speculative error was not the rejection but the more spiritual interpretation of the old creed; and his remedy for bad squires and parsons was not disendowment and division of the land, but the raising up a better generation of parsons and squires.

There is a superficial resemblance between this theory and that of the Young England school, who, like Kingsley, would have restored the feudal system in a purified state. Some of his writing runs parallel to Lord Beaconsfield's exposition of that doctrine. The difference was, of course, vital. He hated mediæval revivalism as heartily as he hated the demagogues; and his prejudices against the whole order of ideas represented by the "Tracts for the Times" were perhaps the strongest of his antipathies. He looked back to the

[1] "Life," vol. i. p. 314.

sixteenth, not to the twelfth century; and his ideal parson was to be no ascetic, but a married man with a taste for field-sports, and fully sympathising with the common-sense of the laity. The Young England party seemed to him to desire the conversion of the modern labourer into a picturesque peasant, ready to receive doles at the castle-gate and bow before the priest with bland subservience. Kingsley wanted to make a man of him; to give him self-respect and independence, not in a sense which would imply the levelling all social superiorities, but in the sense of assigning to him an honourable position in the social organisation. He was no more to be petted or pauperised than to be set on a level with his social superiors, or set loose without guidance from his intellectual teachers.

Some such doctrines would be verbally accepted by most men; and I cannot here ask whether they really require the teaching with which Kingsley associated them. The demagogues and the obstructives were both, according to him, on a wrong tack; and he could point out the one true method of reuniting development with order. Whatever the value of his theories, the sentiment associated with them was substantially healthy, vigorous, and elevated. That part of his fictions in which it is embodied is probably his most valuable work. Nobody can read the descriptions of

the agricultural labourers or of the London artisan in "Yeast" and "Alton Locke" without recognising both the strength of his sympathies and the vigour of his perceptive faculties. He was drawing from the life, and expressing his deepest emotions. "What is the use of preaching to hungry paupers about heaven?" he asks. "Sir, as my clerk said to me yesterday, there is a weight on their hearts, and they call for no hope and no change, for they know they can be no worse off than they are." The phrase explains what was the curse which rested upon Kingsley's parishioners, and in what sense he had to "redeem it from barbarism." He did his work like a man. He was daily with his people "in their cottages, and made a point of talking to the men and boys at their fieldwork till he was personally intimate with every soul, from the women at their washtubs to the babies in the cradle, for whom he had always a loving word and look." Whatever we may think of his "socialism" or "democracy," there was at least no want of depth or sincerity in his sympathy for the poor, and therefore there is no false ring in his description of their condition. He writes with his heart—not to serve any political purpose or to gain credit for a cheap display of charitable feeling.

These books, in fact, show, both by their defects and their merits, in what sense a novel may properly be sub-

servient to a purpose. To draw a vivid picture of the life which he sees around him, or to draw it in such a way as to indicate a true appreciation of the most deeply-seated causes of the evil, is clearly as legitimate in an artistic as in a moral sense. No books can show more forcibly the dark side of the English society of the time. The side from which Kingsley views the evil is characteristic. The root of all that is good in man lies in the purity and vigour of the domestic affections. A condition of things in which the stability and health of the family become impossible is one in which the very foundations of society are being sapped. Nobody could be more alive to the countless mischiefs implied in the statement that the poor man has nothing deserving the name of home. The verses given to Tregarva in "Yeast" sum up his diagnosis of the social disease with admirable vigour. Many scenes in that rather chaotic story are equally vivid in their presentation of the facts. The description of the village feast is a bit of startlingly impressive realism. The poor, sodden, hopeless, spiritless peasantry consoling themselves with strong drink and brutal songs, open to no impressions of beauty, with no sense of the romantic except in lawless passion, and too beaten down to have even a thought of rebellion except in the shape of agrarian outrage, are described with singular force. Poor Crawy, the poacher, scarcely

elevated above the beasts, looking to the gaol and workhouse for his only refuge, so degraded that pity is almost lost in disgust, is the significant product of the general decay. The race is deteriorating. It has fallen vastly below the standard of the last generation. All the lads are "smaller, clumsier, lower-brained and weaker-jawed than their elders." Such higher feeling as remains takes the form of the dog-like fidelity of Harry Verney, the gamekeeper. Kingsley never wrote a better scene than the death of the old man from a wound received in a poaching affray; when he suddenly springs upright in bed, holds out "his withered paw with a kind of wild majesty," and shouts, "There ain't such a head of hares on any manor in the county! And them's the last words of Harry Verney!"

"Alton Locke" is à more ambitious and coherent effort; and the descriptions of the London population, and of the futile attempt at a rising in the country, are in the same vigorous vein. Perhaps a more remarkable success is the old Scotchman, Mackaye, who seems to be the best of Kingsley's characters. He has some real humour, a quality in which Kingsley was for the most part curiously deficient; but one must expect that in this case he was drawing from an original. It is interesting to read Mr. Carlyle's criticism of this part of

the book. "Saunders Mackaye," he says,[1] "my invaluable countryman in this book, is nearly perfect; indeed I greatly wonder how you did contrive to manage him. His very dialect is as if a native had done it, and the whole existence of the rugged old hero is a wonderfully splendid and coherent piece of Scotch bravura." Perhaps an explanation of the wonder might be suggested to other people more easily than to Mr. Carlyle; but, at any rate, Mackaye is a very felicitous centre for the various groups who play their parts in the story; and not the less efficient as a chorus because he is chiefly critical and confines himself to shrewd demonstrations of the folly of everybody concerned.

Mr. Carlyle gives as his final verdict that his impression is of "a fervid creation still left half chaotic." In fact, with all the genuine force of "Alton Locke"—and no living novelist has excelled the vividness of certain passages—there is an unsatisfactory side to the whole performance. It is marred by the feverishness which inspires most of his work. There is an attempt to crowd too much into the space, and the emphasis sometimes remains when the power is flagging. Greater reserve of power and more attention to unity of effect would have been required to make it a really great book.

[1] "Life," vol. i. p. 244.

But the most unsatisfactory part is where the author forgets to be a novelist and becomes a preacher and a pamphleteer. The admirable heroine is forced to deliver what is to all purposes a commonplace tract of two or three chapters at the end of the story, when her thoughts, to be effective, should really have been embedded in the structure of the story. Anybody can preach a sermon when no contradiction is allowed; but the novelist ought to show the thought translated into action, and not given in a raw shape of downright comment. As it is, Lady Ellerton is a mere lay-figure who can talk very edifying phrases, but is really tacked on to the outside of the narrative. The moral should have been evolved by the natural course of events; for when it is presented in this point-blank fashion we begin to cavil, and wish that the Chartist or Mackaye might be allowed to show cause against the sentence pronounced. As they can't, we do it for ourselves.

The historical novels which followed indicate a remarkable change. When he published "Two Years Ago," Kingsley had become reconciled to the world. There is an apparent and decidedly unpleasant inconsistency between the denouncer of social wrongs and the novelist who sings the praises of squires, patrons, and guardsmen, with a placid conviction that they sufficiently represent his ideal. The explanation is

partly that, as I have said, Kingsley never accepted the revolutionary remedy for the grievances which he described. He was quite consistent in regarding the old creed as expressing the true mode of cure. But one must still ask whether the facts had changed. Was the world regenerated between 1848 and 1855? Were English labourers all properly fed, housed, and taught? Had the sanctity of domestic life acquired a new charm in the interval, and was the old quarrel between rich and poor definitively settled or in the way to settlement? That appears to have been Kingsley's own view, if we may judge from the prefaces prefixed to later editions of his book; and the great agency to which he assigns the strange improvement was the outbreak of the Crimean war. That crisis, it seems, had taught the higher classes a deeper sense of their responsibility, and roused us from the dangerous slumber of peace and growing wealth. Mr. Herbert Spencer has lately expounded a very different theory as to the results of an increased intensity of the military spirit. Without discussing so wide a question, it may, I fancy, be pretty safely assumed that the future historian will not take quite this view of recent affairs, and will attribute any improvement that may have taken place to some deeper cause than that assigned. When a whole social order is rotting, as the author of "Yeast" supposed ours to have

been, it is not often cured by a little sputter of fighting; nor does the belief in the efficacy of such a remedy seem to fit in very well with a spiritual Christianity. Perhaps we may further assume, therefore, that the change was rather in the spectator than in the spectacle. If so, Kingsley was not the first man to account for an alteration in his personal outlook by a movement of the rest of the universe. His parish had been got into better order; his combative instinct had grown weaker; and, like other men who grow in years and domestic comfort, he had become more content with things in general. Fathers of families are capable, we know, of everything, and amongst other things, of softening the fervour of their early enthusiasms. There is nothing at all strange in the process; but it must be taken to illustrate the fact that, if Kingsley's sympathies were keen, his intellectual insight was not very deep. A man who holds that a social disease is so easily suppressed, has not measured very accurately the constitutional disorder which it revealed.

"Two Years Ago," the book in which this conclusion is plainly announced, is in many respects a painful performance. It contains, indeed, some admirable descriptions of scenery; but the sentiment is poor and fretful. Tom Thurnall, intended to be an embodiment of masculine vigour, has no real stuff in him.

He is a bragging, excitable, and at bottom sentimental person. All his swagger fails to convince us that he is a true man. Put beside a really simple and masculine nature like Dandie Dinmont, or even beside Kingsley's own Amyas Leigh, one sees his hollowness. The whole story leads up to a distribution of poetical justice in Kingsley's worst manner. He has a lamentable weakness for taking upon himself the part of Providence. "After all," he once wrote in "Yeast," "your 'Rake's Progress' and 'Atheist's Deathbed' do no more good than noble George Cruikshank's 'Bottle' will, because every one knows that they are the exception and not the rule; that the atheist generally dies with a conscience as comfortably callous as a rhinoceros-hide; and the rake, when age stops his power of sinning, becomes generally rather more respectable than his neighbours." It is a pity that Kingsley could not remember this true saying in later years. He seems to have grown too impatient to leave room for the natural evolution of events. He gives the machinery a jerk, and is fidgety because the wheels grind so slowly, though they "grind exceeding small."

Between "Alton Locke" and "Two Years Ago" there luckily intervened "Hypatia" and "Westward Ho!" They are brilliant and almost solitary exceptions to the general dreariness of the historical novel.

To criticise them either from the historical or the artistic point of view would indeed be easy enough; but they have a vivacity which defies criticism. I have no doubt that "Hypatia" is fundamentally and hopelessly inaccurate, and that a sound historian would shudder at innumerable anachronisms and pick-holes in every paragraph. I don't believe that men like the Goths ever existed in this world, and am prepared to give up the whole tribe of monks, pagans, Jews, and fathers of the Church. If "Westward Ho!" is (as I presume) less inaccurate because dealing with less distant ages, it is still too much of a party pamphlet to be taken for history. The Jesuits are probably caricatures, and Miss Ayacanora is a bit of rather silly melodrama. But it is difficult to say too much in favour of the singular animation and movement of both books. There is a want of repose, if you insist upon applying the highest canons of art; but the brilliance of description, the energy and rapidity of the action, simply disarm the reader. I rejoice in the Amal and Wulf and Raphael Aben Ezra, as I love Ivanhoe, and Front de Bœuf, and Wamba the Witless. The fight between "English mastiffs and Spanish bloodhounds" is almost as stirring as the skirmish of Drumclog in "Old Mortality." "Hypatia," according to Kingsley himself, was written with his heart's blood. Like other

phrases of his, that requires a little dilution. But, at any rate, both books stand out for vividness, for a happy audacity and quickness of perception, above all modern attempts in the same direction.

The problems discussed in these historical novels and the solutions suggested are of course substantially the same as in his earlier books. The period of "Hypatia" bears a striking analogy to the present. In the heroes described in "Westward Ho!" he supposed himself to recognise the fullest realisation of the fundamental doctrines of his own creed. Much might be said, were it worth saying, as to the accuracy of these assumptions. Kingsley's method is in any case too much tainted by the obvious tendency to see facts by the light of preconceived theories. In the earlier writings he may be one-sided and exaggerated; but his imagination is at least guided by reference to actual observation. It seems as if in this later period he had instinctively turned away to distant periods where men and events might be more easily moulded into conformity with his prejudices. However skilful a man may be in accommodating fact to fancy, he is apt to find difficulties when he paints from the life around him. But when nobody can contradict you except a few prosaic antiquaries, the outside world becomes delightfully malleable. You do not find any

fragments of rigid material in the clay which shapes itself so easily in your fingers. Kingsley has faith enough in his teaching to give a genuine glow to these hybrid beings begotten half of fancy half of the external world. But we feel too plainly that the work will not stand the test of close examination, either by the historian or the literary critic. Such a nemesis naturally overtakes men who admit too easily an appeal from fact to sentiment. They begin to lose the sense of reality, and their artistic work shows signs of flimsiness as their theories of arbitrary assumption. The great writer pierces to the true life of a period because he recognises the necessity of conforming his beliefs to realities. The inferior writer uses his knowledge only to give colouring to his dreams, and his work tries to represent what he would like to be the truth instead of showing genuine insight into what is actually true.

Whatever else in Kingsley may have been affected or half-hearted, his appreciation of nature remained true and healthy to the end. If anything it became more intense as he seemed to grow weary of abstract discussions, and turned for relief to natural scenes. Nobody has ever shown a greater power of investing with a romantic charm the descriptions of bird, beast, and insect. There are no more delightful books than

those which express the naturalist's delight in country sights, from the days of Izaak Walton to White of Selborne, or Waterton, or our most recent discovery, the Scotch naturalist Edward. Amongst such writers, Kingsley is in the front rank; and his taste is combined with a power of catching wider aspects of scenery, such as few of our professional describers can rival. It would be interesting to lay bare the secret of his power. He has done for Devon and Cornwall, for the heaths and chalk-streams of the southern counties, and even for the much-depreciated fens, what Scott did for the Highlands. One secret is of course the terseness and directness of his descriptions. He never lays himself out for a bit of deliberate bombast, and deals always with first-hand impressions. The writing is all alive. There is no dead matter of conventional phrases and imitative ecstasies. And again, his descriptions are always dramatic. There is a human being in the foreground with whom we sympathise. We do not lose ourselves in mystic meditations, or surrender ourselves to mere sensuous dreaming. We are in active strenuous enjoyment; beguiling the trout of his favourite chalk-streams, sailing under the storm-beaten cliffs of Lundy, and drinking in the rich sea-breeze that sweeps over Dartmoor, or galloping with clenched teeth through

the fir-woods of Eversley. One characteristic picture—to take one at random from a hundred—is the homeward ride of Zeal-for-Truth Thoresby of Thoresby Rise in Deeping Fen as he rides slowly homeward after Naseby fight along one of the fen-droves. One could swear that one had been with him, as Kingsley no doubt was merely embodying the vivid recollection of some old Cambridge expedition into the Bedford Level, a scenery which has a singular and mysterious charm, though few besides Kingsley have succeeded in putting it on paper.

Some wonder has been wasted on Kingsley's descriptions of the tropical scenery which he had never seen. Even men of genius do not work miracles; and so far as I know, they always blunder in such attempts. Johnson showed his usual sense in regard to a similar criticism upon the blind poet, Blacklock. If, he said, you found that a paralytic man had left his room, you would explain the wonder by supposing that he had been carried. Similarly, the explanation of Kingsley and of Blacklock is that they described not what they had seen but what they had read. The description in "Westward Ho!" may easily be traced to Humboldt and other sources where they are not explicable by a visit to Kew Gardens. A minute criticism would show

that they are little more than catalogues of gorgeous plants and strange beasts; and show none of those vivid touches, so striking from their fidelity, which give animation to his descriptions of English scenery. In his pictures of Devonshire we can tell the time of the day and night and the state of the weather as clearly as if he were a meteorologist. In South America he leaves us to generalities. The true secret of his success is different. He describes vividly not the outward fact, but the inward enjoyment. One need not go to the tropics to imagine the charm of luxurious indolence. Perhaps we enjoy it the more because we have not really been exposed to its inconveniences. The dazzling of the eye by blazing sunlight and brilliant colours, the relief given by the cool deep streams under luxuriant foliage, the vague consciousness of wondrous forms of life lurking in the forest depths, can be realised without any special accuracy of portraiture. The contagion to which we are really exposed is that of the enthusiasm with which Kingsley had read his favourite books of travel. But of downright description there is little, and that little not very remarkable. If anybody doubts it he may read the passage of river scenery which concludes with a quotation from Humboldt, and observe how vividly the fragment of actual observation stands

out from the mere catalogue of curiosities; or, again, with any of Kingsley's own Devonshire scenes, where every touch shows loving familiarity with details and a consequent power of selecting just the most speaking incidents.

We may put two passages beside each other which will illustrate the difference. Describing, after Humboldt, the mid-day calm of the forest, he says, "The birds' notes died out one by one; the very butterflies ceased their flitting over the tree-tops, and slept with outspread wings upon the glassy leaves, undistinguishable from the flowers around them. Now and then a colibri whirred downward towards the water, hummed for a moment round some pendent flower, and then the living gem was lost in the deep darkness of the inner wood, among tree trunks as huge and dark as the pillars of some Hindoo shrine; or a parrot swung and screamed at them from an overhanging bough; or a thirsty monkey slid lazily down a liana to the surface of the stream, dipped up the water in his tiny hand, and started chattering back, as his eyes met those of some foul alligator peering upward through the clear depths below." This and more is good enough, but there is nothing which would not suggest itself to a visitor to the British Museum or the Zoological Gardens. It is a

catalogue, and rather too full a catalogue, of curiosities, without one of those vivid touches which reveals actual observation. At the end of the same volume we have a real sketch from nature. Amyas and his friends walk to the cliffs of Lundy: "As they approached, a raven, who sat upon the topmost stone, black against the bright blue sky, flapped lazily away, and sank down the abysses of the cliff, as if he had scented the corpses beneath the surge. Below them, from the gull-rock rose a thousand birds, and filled the air with sound; the choughs cackled, the hacklets wailed, the great black-backs laughed querulous defiance at the intruders, and a single falcon, with an angry bark, darted out from beneath their feet, and hung poised high aloft, watching the sea-fowl which swung slowly round and round below." That gives the atmospheric effect, and what we may call the dramatic character. Every phrase suggests a picture, and the whole description, of which I have quoted a bit, has real unity of effect, instead of being a simple enumeration of details.

When one reads some passages inspired by this hearty and simple-minded love of nature, one is sometimes half tempted to wish that Kingsley could have put aside his preachings, social, theological, and philosophical, and have been content with a function for

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